

America's Engine of Economic Growth Hinges on Latino Educational Success

By The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics

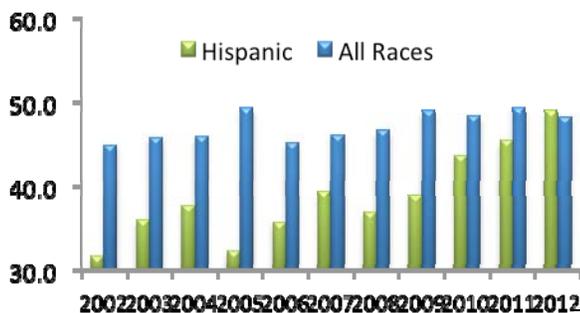
A generation ago it was good enough when 40 percent of Americans held a two-year or a four-year degree. Back then, that statistic made the United States the most educated country in the world. In fact, the United States led the world in college degree attainment among young adults, ages 25 – 34; but, in recent years, we have fallen sharply and now hold steady at 12th place. The top three countries out educating us are Korea, Japan, and Canada. In today's competitive marketplace and with the increasing demand of high-skilled workers, improving college degree attainment for the Hispanic community is critical to the nation remaining competitive in the global economy. According to demographic growth projections, 84 million Hispanics¹ will inhabit the United States by the year 2050, representing 25 percent of the country's population.

In 2015, the [White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics](#) (Initiative) will celebrate its 25th anniversary. First created to address the alarming high school dropout rate for Latinos – a demoralizing 32 percent compared with the national rate of 12 percent – it has since expanded its focus to address cradle-to-career educational issues impacting the Hispanic community at large. The Initiative's upcoming anniversary will provide an opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved and to identify persistent opportunity and achievement gaps that still exist. Most importantly, the Initiative, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders can recommit to identifying and shaping new efforts, investments, and targeted policies that ensure the educational success of the Latino community and the economic vitality of our nation.

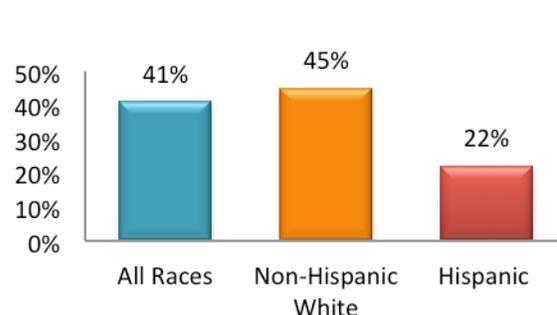
The State of Latino Education

The future of the nation is inextricably linked to the future of the Hispanic community. Hispanics are the largest, youngest, and fastest-growing minority group, and will represent 70 percent of our nation's population growth between 2015 and 2060². Hispanic educational attainment is not about ethnicity; it is increasingly about demographics, economics, and the workforce. The Hispanic community holds the key to the President's 2020 goal of once again having the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world. To achieve this goal, Latinos will need to earn 3.5 million³ more degrees by 2020. As a community, we have made significant progress. During the Obama administration's first term, college enrollment among Hispanics reached a record high and continues to increase. Since 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Hispanic college enrollment has grown by more than 1.1 million students. Additionally, college enrollment is up more for Hispanics than any other group. In 2012, the college enrollment rate among 18-to-24-year-old Hispanic high school graduates was over 49 percent, up from 31 percent in 2002⁴. While these are promising trends, there is still much work to do. Our nation must do more to develop and maintain systems that will allow Latino youth and future generations to complete college. Today, only 22 percent of Latino adults 25 and older hold an associate's degree or higher, significantly lower than their white peers. Our nation's economic future hinges on the educational success of Latino students. Government cannot and should not solve this problem alone. By bringing together educators, families, community, nonprofit, faith-based, business and philanthropy leaders, we can solve the economic and civil rights issue of our time.

College Enrollment Rates among 18-24 year old High School Completers



% Of Population with an Associate's degree or higher (25 and older)



*Source: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/school/data/cps/historical/index.html>

*Source: U.S Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2013

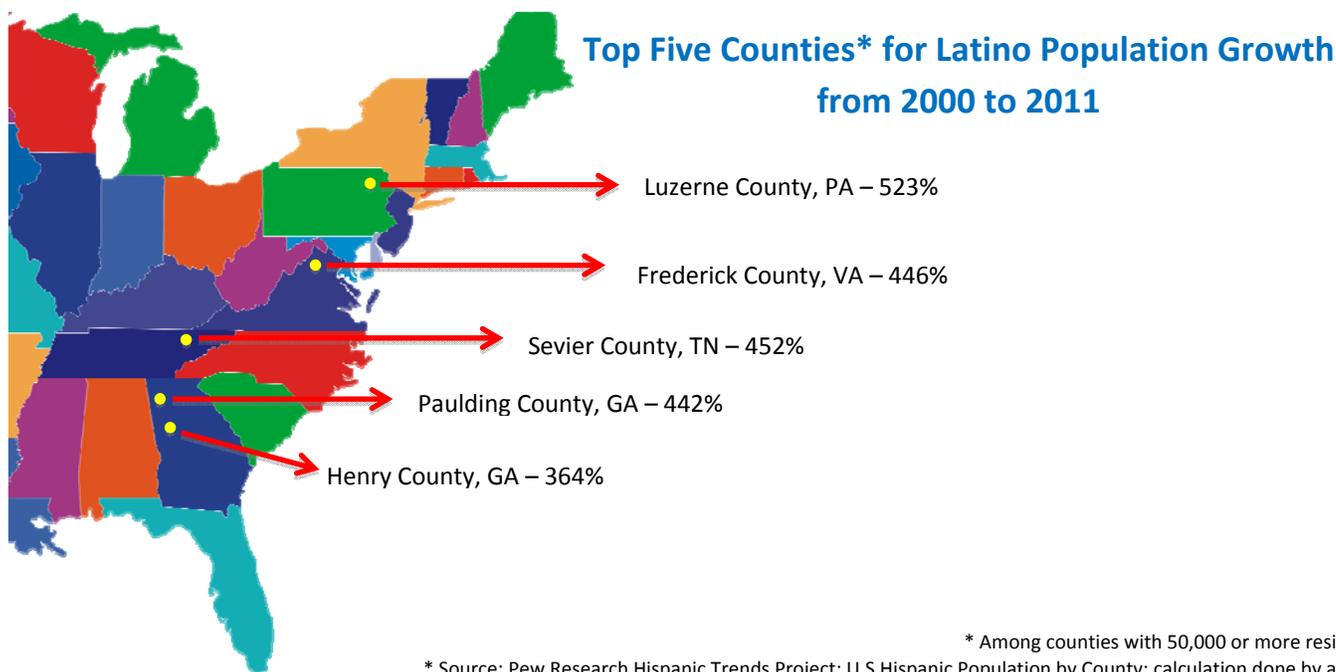
The Educational Spectrum

In tandem with the Obama administration's education agenda, the Initiative has prioritized key issues for its second term efforts: raise awareness of the benefits of and increase access to a *quality early childhood education*; highlight robust and effective examples of *reform and rigor in our K-12 school systems*; and promote promising practices, partnerships, and institutions of higher education that are *graduating more Latinos* ready and prepared to enter *the competitive workforce*.

Over the coming months, the Initiative is poised to bring national attention to key policy issues impacting the Latino community while highlighting programs and community leaders in action. By partnering with the business and philanthropy communities, the Initiative aims to accelerate Hispanic achievement across the educational spectrum.

A key pathway for our efforts lies in the new and emerging communities that have experienced some of the largest Hispanic population growth over the last decade. While more than half⁵ of all Latinos are concentrated in three states – California, Texas and Florida – states like Alabama and South Carolina have seen more than a 150 percent increase⁶ since 2000. Latinos and the education systems that serve them in these emerging communities often experience unique challenges and are not equipped with the same resources available in more established communities.

As the Initiative, other stakeholders, and the public work to reframe the Latino educational narrative from a deficit-based one to an asset-driven one, the Initiative will rely on data showing impact and what our community tells us is working. Throughout the second term, we will highlight *Bright Spots* – evidence-based programs or models that address key topics and have a positive impact on the Latino community. In the spirit of President Obama's [Year of Action](#), we have provided recommendations for action that will help move the conversation forward and expand what is working.



High-Quality Early Learning

The foundation of a thriving middle class is a strong education. But millions of children in this country cannot reach the first rung on the ladder of opportunity because they are cut off from a quality early childhood education. Latinos make up nearly 24 percent of all pre-K-12 public school students and are the largest segment of the early childhood population in the nation⁷. However, less than half of Hispanic children are enrolled in any early learning program; and for those who do attend, program quality varies widely.

Research proves that early childhood achievement affects later success. By age two, Hispanic children are less likely than their non-Hispanic peers to demonstrate expressive⁸ vocabulary skills. The benefits of preschool are particularly powerful among children from low-income families who, on average, start kindergarten 12 to 14 months behind their peers in pre-

reading and language skills – evidence that the achievement gap begins as early as kindergarten. Studies reveal that children from middle- and upper-class households have heard some 30 million more words by age five than children from lower-income households. English-proficient Hispanic children are about three months behind white children in pre-reading skills and five months behind in early math skills.

Improving the quality of early learning programs and the Latino community's access to them is more than just a moral and educational imperative; it is smart government. For every dollar spent on high-quality preschool, there is a 7-dollar return⁹ through increased productivity and savings on public assistance and criminal justice services.

K-12 Education

To create an economy built to last, every child must be provided with a complete and competitive education that will enable them to succeed in a global economy based on knowledge and innovation. This is especially critical for our Latino youth to ensure they attend schools that provide a well-rounded education, are staffed with quality teachers, and are exposed to a college-going culture and rigorous courses that will prepare them to be ready for college and careers.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has said, "In today's connected, fast-paced, technology-rich world, success isn't just about what you know. It's about what you can do with your knowledge today – and whether you're able to keep learning and adapting over the course of a lifetime." The Initiative aims to support students to become lifelong learners to better increase their life outcomes.

STEM

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills are necessary now more than ever to compete in a global economy. The percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in STEM fields increased by 33 percent from 1996 to 2004. And while there is progress, the need and opportunity are far greater: less than 2 percent of the STEM workforce is Hispanic. Hispanics are not sufficiently exposed to STEM subjects at the K-12 level, score lower than national averages on math and science achievement tests, enroll at significantly lower levels in high school STEM courses, and are underrepresented in undergraduate and graduate STEM programs. According to the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, between 2010 and 2020, overall employment in STEM occupations will increase by 17 percent¹⁰, yet 33 percent of Hispanic high school students attend high schools where the full range of math and science courses are not offered (Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, calculus, biology, chemistry, physics).¹¹

President Obama has articulated a clear priority for STEM education: within a decade, students in this country must "move from the middle to the top of the pack in science and math." Specifically, he has called on the nation to develop, recruit, and retain [100,000 excellent STEM teachers](#) over the next 10 years and to rethink and redesign America's high school learning experience and improve STEM education.

Teachers

Nearly one out of every four public school students is Latino; yet only 7.8 percent of public school teachers are Latino¹². Even worse, less than 2 percent of our nation's teachers are Latino males. An [analysis](#) of teacher diversity prepared by the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force found that increasing the percentage of teachers of color in classrooms is connected directly to closing the achievement gap¹³.

Research indicates that students' race and family income often predict their access to excellent educators. Low-income students and high-need schools tend to have teachers who are less experienced, have fewer credentials, and do not demonstrate a track record of success. There is a need for a rich pool of high-quality, culturally-relevant and competent, and bilingual teachers reflective of the nation's diverse population. The administration's recently launched "[Excellent Educators for All](#)" effort will help states and school districts to support great educators for the students who need them most. The Initiative continues to work with stakeholders across the nation to highlight effective recruitment practices and great Latino teachers in classrooms today.

College Access

Earning a high school diploma is no longer enough. In today's competitive and fast-paced world, high-paying and stable jobs demand higher education or training. Although Latinos are enrolling in college at higher rates, this population still faces unique obstacles that impede pathways to postsecondary education and completion.

A 2009 Pew Hispanic Survey¹⁴ shows that nearly 89 percent of Latino young adults ages 16 to 25 say that a college degree is essential for success in life, yet only about half that number said they planned to get a college degree. According to the survey, financial pressures to help support their families is the primary reason Hispanic students do not continue their education beyond high school (74 percent). Forty-nine percent of those surveyed cited lack of English proficiency and 40 percent reported an inability to afford postsecondary education as reasons for discontinuing their education. Ensuring that more Hispanic students access and complete higher education and training is a shared responsibility. The financial barrier is real, but so is the information barrier.

The Initiative created the [jGradúate! Financial Aid Guide to Success](#) to help Hispanic students and families navigate the college application process. The guide provides recommended steps for the college enrollment process, helpful tips on filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and key public and private financial aid resources available to better support Hispanics, including those with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and non-U.S. citizen students, in their efforts to access a postsecondary education. Providing tools, supports, information, and financial support to Hispanic students and their families starting from middle school years can move the needle toward a more educated community and nation.

Postsecondary Education

Earning a postsecondary degree or credential is no longer just a pathway to opportunity for a talented few; rather, it is a prerequisite for the jobs of the new economy. The President has set restoring our global leadership in this area as the country's North Star in education; and while the educational success of Latino students is key to achieving that goal, as a minority community we have the lowest educational attainment levels. While college enrollment rates have been rising steadily, Latino students are still more likely than their white counterparts to drop out of college. Working collectively and comprehensively to address key issues including access and exposure to a wide-range of two-year and four-year colleges and universities and ensuring academic, mentor, and counselor support to encourage persistence, affordability, and completion remains a priority for this administration.

2011 Full Time Median Earnings



Source: Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce; Education Pays 2013

While America is home to some of the best colleges and universities in the world — and increasing college attainment has never been more important to our economic competitiveness — tuition and fees have skyrocketed over the past decade, making it more difficult for American families to invest in a higher education. Today's college students borrow and rack up more debt than ever before.

In 2010, graduates who took out loans left college owing an average of more than \$26,000. Student loan debt has now surpassed credit card debt for the first time¹⁵. Realizing that college affordability is often one of the biggest barriers to access and completion, the President has raised the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,730 for the 2014-15 award year — a roughly \$1,000 increase since 2008. Under the President's leadership, the number of Pell Grant recipients has expanded by 50 percent over that same time, providing college access to millions of additional low-income and middle-class students across the country, including more than 725,000 additional Hispanic students. The administration also has championed key efforts to help students [pay back their loans](#): from loan consolidation to [income-based repayment](#) and [public service loan forgiveness](#) options.

Workforce

The U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected that of the 47 million new workers entering the labor force between 2010 and 2050, a projected 37.6 million, or 80 percent, will be Latino¹⁶. Lower levels of educational attainment among this population therefore constitute a serious impediment for the American labor force. The possibility of earning higher wages traditionally has served as an incentive for pursuing a higher education. However, in our increasingly global economy, pursuing a higher education can now mean the difference between employment and unemployment. In 2013, the unemployment rate for adults 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher was 3.7 percent compared to 7.5 percent for adults of the same age with only a high school diploma¹⁷, a difference of 920,000 people out of work. It is estimated that almost two thirds of U.S. jobs will require some sort of postsecondary education by 2020¹⁸. Sectors like healthcare and social services are projected to add 5 million jobs between 2012 and 2022. This accounts for nearly one-third of the total projected increase in jobs¹⁹.

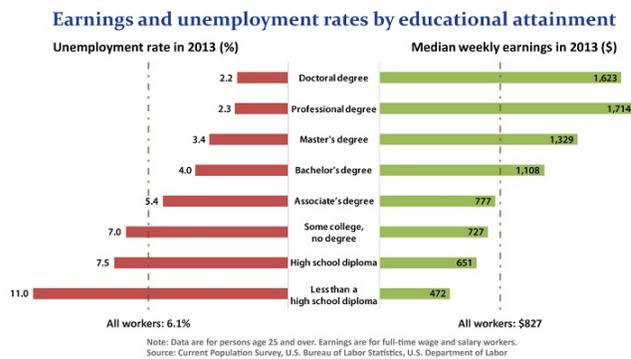
Given the future workforce projections, we must help Latino graduates successfully enter the workforce. A recent [survey](#) indicated that one of the most effective ways to gain employment in this challenging economy is by participating in an internship. The survey found that 69 percent of companies with 100 or more employees offered full-time jobs to their interns in 2012. To ensure a future thriving workforce and develop a strong pipeline between college and career, the public and private sectors should consider providing internships, mentorships, and support networks to help Latino youth find a good-paying job and work their way up into the middle class.

An Anniversary Year of Action and a Shared Responsibility

To commemorate the Initiative's 25-year anniversary, the Initiative will launch an "anniversary year of action" focused on cultivating 25 efforts that will:

- Increase awareness of the benefits of and expand access to quality early learning programs;
- Develop and encourage public-private partnerships to expand quality cradle-to-career programs across the country;
- Advance efforts to support, elevate, and diversify the teaching profession by calling for teacher salaries that are competitive with professions like architecture, medicine and law, and calling for more support for novice teachers and recruiting quality minority and/or culturally competent teachers;
- Address the distinct challenges Latino families face in established and emerging communities, and spur additional investments in programs and initiatives that support them;
- Encourage investments in making college more affordable for low income, first generation students, including Latino, DACA, and undocumented youth;
- Develop systems to expand access to and success in college-level work and advanced coursework while promoting partnerships between k-12 systems and higher education institutions with established dual enrollment and early college programs;
- Promote partnerships between businesses and higher education institutions to help create opportunities for first-generation, low-income, and Latino students, including sharing and amplifying internship, fellowship, and career opportunities; and
- Leverage data, proven approaches to fostering student development and success, and evidence-based programs and practices to inform work in both established and emerging communities.

The road to the middle class leads directly through the classroom. As the Hispanic population grows and becomes an ever-larger proportion of the American workforce, securing a globally competitive education for Latino students is critical. Our nation is currently undergoing one of the most profound moments of transformation in education in its history. It is an "all-hands on deck" moment that we must seize to lead the world with the best educated and most competitive workforce. The Initiative is in a unique position to make history by reflecting on how far we've come and working together to address the challenges that persist. We must continue to pave the way for future generations of Latinos, and collectively pay it forward. The Initiative is committed to increasing opportunities and improving outcomes in education for Hispanics of all ages to ensure America's future is bright. We hope to have you standing by our side.



¹ Note that the terms Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably.

² <https://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2012/summarytables.html> (Table 4 - Middle Series)

³ Less than Excelencia in Education 5.5million (ED measure is for adults 25 to 34, Excelencia measure includes adults 25 and older)

⁴ <http://www.census.gov/hhes/school/data/cps/historical/index.html>

⁵ <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/08/29/mapping-the-latino-population-by-state-county-and-city/>

⁶ <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/08/29/ii-ranking-latino-populations-in-the-states/>

⁷ <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/08/20/ii-hispanic-public-school-enrollments/>

⁸ Expressive language, is most simply the “output” of language, how one expresses his or her wants and needs. This includes not only words, but also the grammar rules that dictate how words are combined into phrases, sentences and paragraphs as well as the use of gestures and facial expressions

⁹ Professor James Heckman; Nobel Prize winning Economist from the University of Chicago

¹⁰ http://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=6aaa7e1f-9586-47be-82e7-326f47658320

¹¹ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-college-and-career-readiness-snapshot.pdf> (page 8)

¹² <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013314.pdf> (page 6)

¹³ <http://www.nea.org/home/15200.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/10/07/latinos-and-education-explaining-the-attainment-gap/>

¹⁵ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/higher-education>

¹⁶ <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2012/10/art1full.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat07.htm>

¹⁸ Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, 2011.

¹⁹ <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.nr0.htm>