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Abstract

This project explores the extent in which federally funded programs, Chicano/a studies courses and Chicano/a Studies departments in predominantly white institutions have provided an inclusive learning environment for Hispanic students. The goal of this paper is to shed light on the resources universities provide for Hispanic students. Studies have shown that Latinos students attending predominantly white institutions experience more hardships because of the resources that are less inclusive of their experiences. This work uses peer review and scholarly sources as the method of analysis to assess the effectiveness of retention practices by colleges and universities with Hispanic students.

Key Words: Hispanic, College Students, Performance, Curricula, White Institutions

Introduction

First generation Latino students face various challenges as they navigate through school without any familiar guidance. Their migrant backgrounds, lack of financial and academic support makes Latino students underprepared for their college experience. As the population of Hispanics in the U.S increases there is a greater necessity to provide them with the adequate tools they need to prevent unemployment and low-income wages (Berberry, 2017). Universities have invested in touring around high schools to recruit students of color as their main strategy to diversify the institution. However, universities are focusing too heavily on recruitment and are not paying much attention to retaining Hispanic students (Garcia, 2015). Studies found that even though Hispanics have high aspirations for their education, students from Hispanic backgrounds are dropping out in higher rates than white and black students (Berrberry, 2017).

Predominantly white institutions have placed values in providing equal opportunities for Hispanic students. However, the extent to which these resources are useful for students is questionable. The college efforts remain ambiguous whether they are doing this to meet the enrollment quotas, or because they are genuinely interested in building an effective pathway to help students obtain their degrees. This study is broken up into three main practices that have been applied to increase the success of Hispanic students. College services including federally funded programs, Chicano/a studies and Chicano/a studies departments will be evaluated and critically analyzed to focus on the elements that are well executed and the areas where they fall short.

Federally Funded Programs

Federally funded programs are a great way to provide students with the tools they need to succeed in school. The Higher Education Act is a legislation that provides support services for underrepresented populations such as Latino communities (Brown, 2003). Programs such as College Assistant Migrant Program and TRiO are federally funded programs that enable schools to provide undergraduate students with academic assistance such as assigning them to mentors and tutors. Graham, a student enrolled in two TRiO Programs, Upward Bound and McNair, reported that she did not feel the same amount of culture shock as her peers because she was already trained how to balance a rigorous work load (Graham, 2011). Her self-report contextualizes the experiences of low income high school students that are not provided with a strong academic preparation before they enter in higher education (Chaney, 1998). In efforts to bridge the transition, these resources train students for higher education and are there to help them once they have arrived into college. While marginalized students receive guidance in their educational development, graduation becomes more attainable. In 2014, 51% of students in SSS graduated from 4 year institutions.

TRiO programs value student integration. Student integration means that students feel that they are an equal part of a community. Because many students who qualify for Student Support Services (SSS) are disadvantaged, these programs have acknowledged that undergrads have nonacademic needs. Along with mentoring, they also encourage students to attend cultural events (Chaney,1998). It is important to note that some schools provide their own resources such as workshops and multicultural events that are not through SSS. Nonetheless, the extent to which institutions have the funds to provide those resources differ within institutions (Chaney,1998). Even though universities may be providing these workshops, but federally funded programs have proven that their platform is guiding students to success.

Although support services have been proven to be effective, because they are federally funded, the grants are not always renewed. Unfortunately, there are administrative and congressional groups that do not believe using federally funded grants to help students from low socioeconomic class or students with disabilities (Mahoney,1998). Only one in three Universities have the SSS grant (Chaney, 1998). Even though the services are proven to help students succeed, schools are constantly in jeopardy of losing the grant. Many students also reported that staff was limited, and they were not always available when the student needed assistance (Mahoney, 1998). When the resources are low within federally funded programs it is questionable weather the institution has enough leverage in other departments that would still serve Latino/a students to lead them to the same success rate.

Chicano/a Studies Courses

Additionally, predominantly white institutions have adopted Chicano/a Studies courses under the classes they offer. Currently scholars are publishing evaluations on the current patterns of Eurocentric pedagogical approaches to college curricula. As an initiative to promote an inclusive college environment, studies have shed light on the benefits of including multicultural perspectives in education. Applications include but are not limited to "classroom experiences, course content, and cocurricular diversity experiences" (Chun, 2015 Pg. 41). Moreover, on the relevant practices that improve the academic achievements of Hispanics, Chicano education was established to provide alternative learning elements missing in Eurocentric curricula.

Evidence suggest Chicano/a Studies courses have a positive relationship with the persistence of Hispanic students earning their high school diploma and enrolling into college. For instance, the Chicano program was not established until the 1960's. Though it is a relatively new field of study in institutions, it has made a major break though in influencing students to go to

college. In the University of California, Davis, the Chicano/a programs was established in 1971. Before the program, among 12,000 students enrolled, Chicanos only made up for 50 of them. Twenty years after, the Chicano/a Studies was a major contributor to increasing the number of Chicanos enrolled to 14,000 (Rochin, 1992). Additionally, in 1998, Tucson Unified School district was a major contributor to acknowledging that Mexican American studies was successful in high schools. Of Mexican Americans who took the course, 97% graduated compared to 44% percent of national graduation rates. Not only that but 70% of those who took the course enrolled for higher education, which was 46% higher than national rates (Lundholm,2011).

Chicano/a studies has now been accepted as an essential component to the school's diversity initiative and has been institutionalized to enrich students' knowledge about their ethnicity. Some universities have implemented ethnic education courses including Chicano education as an option for requirement of ethnic studies to fulfill general prerequisites for the students' degree (Garcia, 2015). This allows students who are not majoring in ethnic studies to gain an understanding of various cultures. Making Chicano/a studies a prerequisite reinforces the concept that having an interdisciplinary understanding on race and culture is essential to be successful after graduation.

Administrators and students in Chicano/a studies have expressed their concerns about the classes. Though, the courses are essential to the learning experience for Hispanic students, faculty have made concerns about Chicano/a courses being the only place that provides students with cultural education (Garcia, 2015). The Chicano/a studies does not fix the issue where Hispanic students are not learning about their culture within different sectors of the school. One student reported that he Chicano/s studies was the only place where he had learned about his culture (Garcia, 2015). Stem majors and other students who may not overlap in social and ethnic

studies may never see the benefits in the personal empowerment and critical cultural thinking that Chicano studies may offer (Garcia, 2015).

Chicano/a Studies Departments

Academic administrators in the past understood that Chicano/a studies alone would not fu fill the holistic needs of Latino students. The Chicano/a movement ignited a push for academic equity for Hispanics. Having departments as a foundation for these courses would strengthen the programs. Self-reported data from Latinx students suggest that Chicano/a Studies departments that are provided by the institution are supportive components to the success of marginalized undergraduates. One student discussed that the Chicano/a department gave them "the intellectual space" to learn about their culture. They stated that the department was a center for empowerment. Another students mentioned that is was a place of community where they felt comfortable expressing their problems (Rhoads, 1998).

Chicano departments have made great progress in terms of establishing themselves in institutions. Only 29 schools had Chicano/a courses in 1972 and within those schools only a few had departments devoted to the studies (Rhoads, 1998). Even in the 90s a few universities still did not have the department even after strong demands (Garcia, 2015). Besides providing a center for students, these departments have autonomy over hiring faculty to teach in the courses (Rhoads, 1998). The need to designate their own full-time faculty is critical to having faculty who are focused on serving Hispanic students. In fact, the lack of employees may have led some students to have expressed their concerns on the lack of outreach efforts in cultural departments and reported that they were not aware of the programs and services on campus (Jones,2002). Not only that but, hiring faculty of color was a priority to educate students. Among the many results found on educational outcomes from diverse curricula, the most consistent was "acceptance of

people with different races/cultures, culture awareness (and) tolerance of people with different beliefs" (Hurtado 2001, Pg 13) when the course was taught by faculty with a racial or ethnic background. This proves that the departments are critical to providing students of all backgrounds cultural comprehension.

Hispanic Serving Institutions

The initiatives listed are clear evidence of attempts to better serve Hispanic students. Yet some may challenge the narrative that institutions are not doing enough to improve academic achievement. To better understand the dynamics of serving under represented students there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of institutions who have been federally assigning to serve Hispanic students.

In 1992 The Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) gave recognition to the first Hispanic Serving Institution. Hispanic Serving Institutions are now known based off their enrollment of Hispanic students which must meet 25% (Nunez, 2015). Since then, HSIs have grown immensely in terms of the Hispanic population they serve but, not in terms of number of institutions. At this point only 11% of degree granting colleges are HIS's. However, they hold 59% of all Hispanic students in the U.S (Nunez, 2015). These statistics are mostly a result of HSI being in locations where the population of Hispanics are higher (Kaplan, 2009).

HEA allows higher education establishments to apply for programs that will make them more available to serve under represented students (Nunez, 2015). This includes their open admissions policy. Open admissions only require a high school diploma or GED to enroll, allowing more students to be eligible to attend college. HSI's also tend to have lower tuition than the average two and four-year public institutions. HSI are almost half the cost of typical tuition,

at rates of $1,590 for HIS's and $3,4000 of the average institution. In addition to admission-based applications, academic services are held to retain their students. This includes cohort programs, mentoring and advising (Kaplan, 2009).

Even though the rates of degrees issued to Hispanic students are not significantly greater in HSI's than all 4-year universities, HSI's have still played a critical role for students. Hispanic Serving Institutions grant degrees to Hispanic students at 39% rate compared to 36% rates on all 4-year institutions (Nunez, 2015). It is important to recognize that HIS hold the majority of marginalized, low socioeconomic groups that face more challenges in academic achievement, without equitable resources (Nunez, Mitchell). These universities may be educating students who were not provided with quality education in high school.

Conclusion

Evaluating the academic focus on Hispanic students across institutions is crucial to understanding how marginalized undergraduates are represented. As observed federally funded, programs provide students with the tool they need to adapt to college expectations. Chicano/a Studies gave students self-efficacy through education about their culture. And institutionalizing departments strengthened the initiatives to serve Hispanic students. Individually these programs contribute to the success of Hispanic students in different ways. Admittedly, it reinforces how critical it is to carry these programs as fully functional and implemented nationally. Even more so, all these programs have or are currently facing reluctance from administration to continue supporting them. Even as success rates from predominantly white institutions are compared to Hispanic Serving Institutions, it remains apparent that Hispanics students remain underserved.

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