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Exploring the obstacles hindering the academic attainment of Latino/a students

Kevin Kloth, Stephen Whitney, & Jennifer Hart

There are many obstacles that work to hinder the academic attainment of Latino/a students; not only are these students a minority population on most university campuses, but the ratio of Latino/a students to actual state population is disproportionately low as well. There are numerous cultural differences that work to stifle the chance that Latino/a students will attend college in the first place, and even less of a chance that they will graduate. In fact, recent studies by the U.S. General Accounting Office estimate the attrition rate of Latino/a students to be as high as 34.3%. The aim of this research project is to explore the factors that contribute to the resiliency of Latino/a students at a large Mid-western state-funded university. The study aims to understand what programmatic support is currently in place, and what further support systems could be implemented, to help these students as they leave their families to attend college. Through exploring the viewpoints of Latino/a students, a better understanding of their needs and concerns can be addressed. The study is devised for the research team to conduct focus-group based interviews of the research subjects. The transcripts of these interviews will be coded and analyzed to determine what Latino/a students perceive to have helped or hindered them during their collegiate experience. By the completion of the study, we aim to interview twenty percent of the undergraduate Latino/a-identifying population at the university. The results of this study will help university officials and state legislators as they devise spending initiatives and craft programming decisions that relate to the recruitment and retention of Latino/a students at their universities.