



Hispanic Serving Institutions

Updated September, 2019



The Postsecondary National Policy Institute (PNPI) provides current and prospective policymakers with a substantive and collegial foundation on which to build federal higher education policies that drive positive outcomes for students and their families.

For more information please visit pnpi.org.

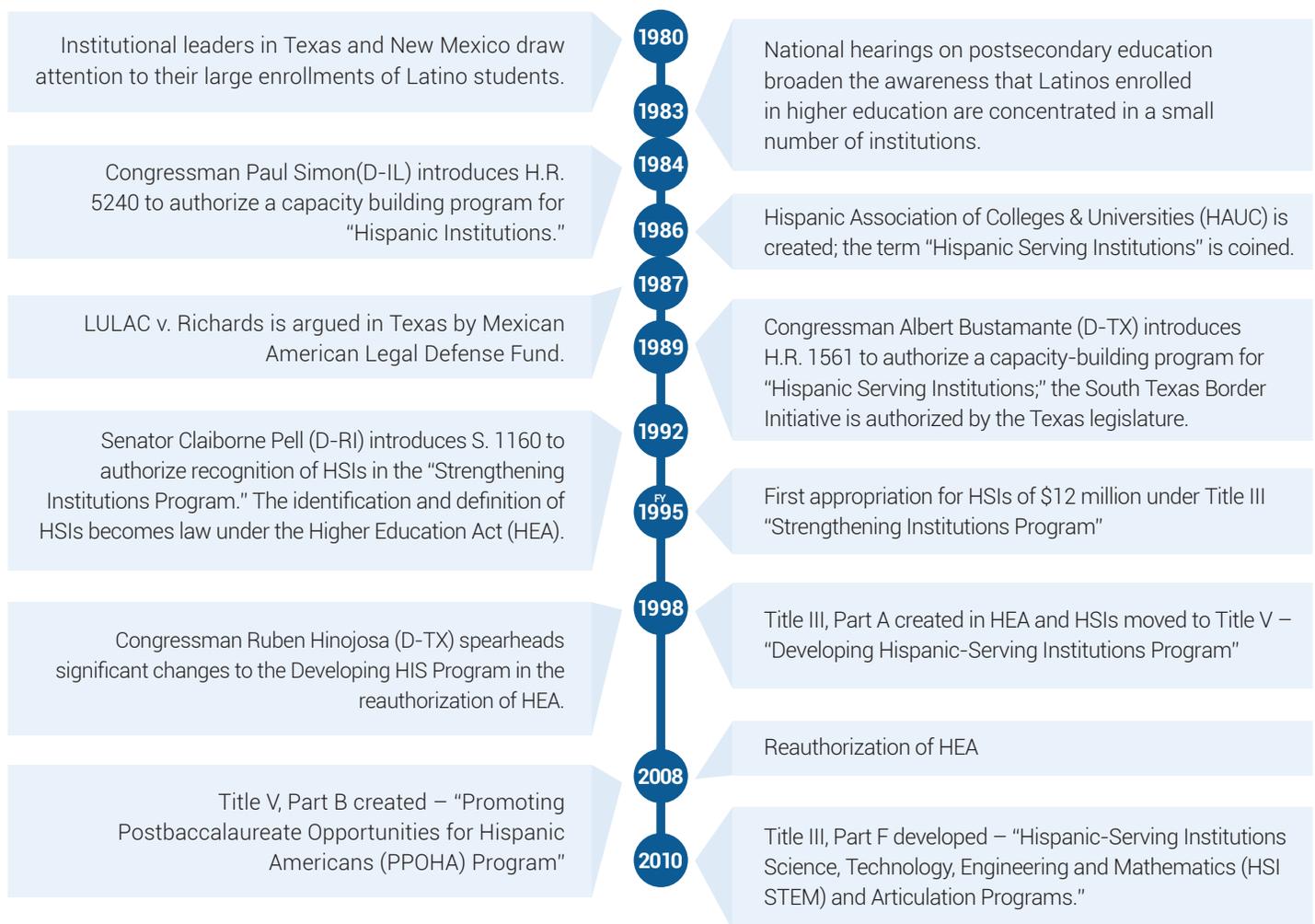
A primer on Hispanic Serving Institutions, what they are, who they serve and the related federal grant program.

In the early 1980s, a series of congressional hearings on Latino access to higher education focused on two themes: Latino students lacked access to higher education and many who began degree programs did not complete them, and Latinos were concentrated at institutions of higher education that received limited financial support from the federal or state governments.

After continued advocacy and increased awareness regarding exponential growth in the Latino population (246% increase between the 1980 and 2010 U.S. Censuses)^[1], a new designation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in Title III's Strengthening Institutions Program was created in 1992. Recognizing the importance of serving the country's rapidly growing Hispanic community, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) were created to expand the educational opportunities for Hispanic students while improving their measures of academic attainment.

The first HSI appropriations were distributed in 1995, and in 1998 HSIs were moved from Title III of the Higher Education Act to their own title, Title V. Title V has two parts: Part A, which consists of the HSI program and Part B, which assists in expanding post-baccalaureate educational opportunities for Hispanic students.

Below is a timeline of the evolution of Hispanic Serving Institution designations and grants.



HSI Grants

To become a designated HSI, an institution's undergraduate full-time equivalent enrollment must be at least 25% Hispanic^[iii] and at least 50% of the Hispanic student body must be low income. The institution must be accredited, degree-granting and a public or private nonprofit college or university. While some MSIs – including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) – were explicitly created to serve particular populations, most HSIs were not. Most institutions become HSIs as a result of enrollment shifts over time.^[iii]

HSI funds are not distributed by formula as they are for other MSIs. Institutions must compete for HSI funds and, if awarded, may use the money in ways similar to those allowed by other Title III institutions (such as purchasing lab equipment, building new facilities, and using 20% of funds to establish or grow an endowment). HSIs are also allowed to fund the following additional activities:

- Establishing or enhancing student support programs to facilitate the transfer of students from two-year to four-year institutions;
- Establishing or enhancing teacher education programs designed to qualify students to teach in public elementary and secondary schools;
- Establishing community outreach programs that encourage elementary and secondary school students to pursue postsecondary education; and
- Expanding the number of Hispanic and other underrepresented graduate and professional students that can be served by an institution through expanding institutional resources and courses offered.

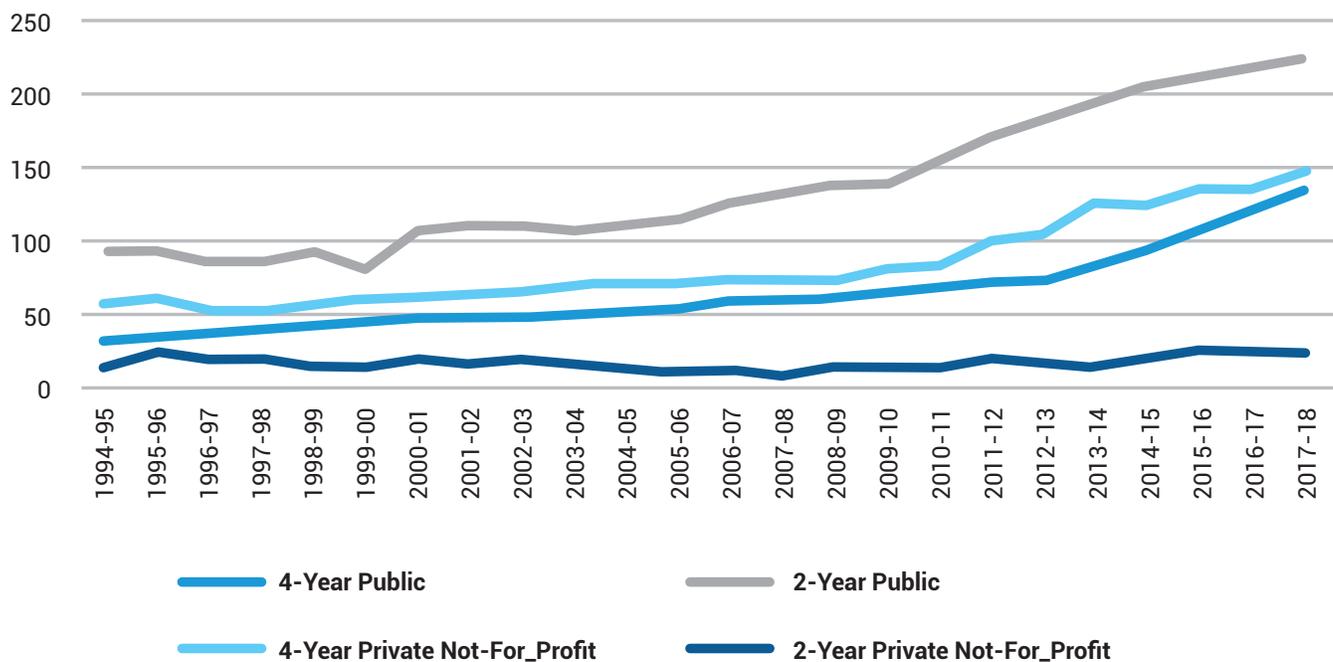
Before applying for Title V funds, institutions must first apply for an HSI designation. If approved, the institution enters a competitive process for a five-year grant. If the institution receives Title V funding, it becomes ineligible to also receive Title III funds.^[iv] This is relevant because enrollment shifts often qualify HSIs to apply for multiple MSI designations (e.g., an institution may qualify to be an HSI and an AANAPISI), but these institutions cannot receive funding from both sources.^[v]

The 2017 appropriation for HSIs was \$200.7 million with over 120 continuing grants and 20 new grants having been funded.^[vi]

Types of Institutions

Of the 523 HSIs in 2017–2018, 68% were public institutions, and 32% were private institutions. For-profit institutions are not eligible to be designated as HSIs. Most HSIs are two-year public institutions and most have total enrollments of under 5,000 students.

Growth in HSIs by Sector 1994-95 to 2017-18



Source: *Excelencia in Education and Department of Education*

While HBCUs represent approximately 2% of all institutions of higher education in the United States, HSIs represent 17%. HSIs exist in 27 states overall and are mostly concentrated in urban areas in five states (California, Texas, Arizona, Florida, and New York) and Puerto Rico.

Click [here](#) for a complete list of HSIs and their locations.

Emerging HSIs^[vii]

Though emerging HSIs are not federally designated, many scholars and advocates take them into consideration when discussing HSIs. Emerging HSIs have 15–24% Hispanic enrollment and are likely to become HSIs soon after they've earned the emerging designation. In 2017, there were 328 emerging HSIs located in 35 states. When enrollment hits 25%, they are encouraged to apply for the HSI designation.

Click [here](#) for a complete list of Emerging HSIs and their locations.

Enrollment, Graduation & Retention

Census data shows that Hispanic enrollment in higher education rose by 18% between 1996 and 2016 – a period in which overall enrollment increased only 5%.^[viii] At HSIs specifically, enrollment increased 281% over this time period while Latino enrollment at HSIs grew 284% to just under two million. In 2017–2018, nearly 66% of Latino college students attended an HSI. At all institutions, 40% of Latino students enroll exclusively full-time and 36% enroll exclusively part-time with the remaining 24% choosing alternate enrollment between full- and part-time.

During the 2017–2018 academic school year, HSIs were responsible for graduating just over 45% of all Latino graduates in the United States. With regard to retention rates for full-time students, retention rates for all students at HSI's are slightly higher than national retention rates for all students at institutions of higher education (67% vs. 66%). Still, their six-year graduation rates are much lower than the national average (43% vs. 57%). This is likely due to the fact that: (1) the majority of Latino students enroll part-time and as a result are not captured in federal graduation and retention statistics, which capture only first-time, full-time students; (2) low-income students are less likely to persist year to year or graduate and there are significant numbers of low-income students enrolled in HSIs; and, (3) a large number of Latino undergraduates take remedial courses (47%) increasing the cost of college and length of time to a degree, two factors that contribute to low persistence and graduation rates.

Demographics

Students at HSIs are a very diverse group. Nearly half of HSI students in 2016–2017 were Latino (49%), 25% were white, non-Hispanic, 9% were African-American, and 8% were Asian.^[ix] In terms of socioeconomic status, 48% of all HSI students received a Pell Grant, indicating the high degree of financial need experienced at HSI campuses.^[x]

Close

Research on HSIs is still emerging, but we do know that the Latino population and the number of Latino college-bound students will, in all likelihood, continue to grow over the coming years. Given the sheer number of Latino students HSIs enroll, they are positioned to continue to play an important part in granting postsecondary access to Hispanic students.

Sources:

[i] [Minority-Serving Institutions: Serving All Students](#)

[ii] Defined by the Code of Federal Regulations as a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

[iii] There are a few exceptions. Some institutions were established “with the express purpose of responding to the educational needs of Hispanic/Latino students.” These institutions include Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community College and Boricua College (both located in New York), St. Augustine (Illinois), which offers bilingual higher education, and National Hispanic University located in California (Hurtado, 2003; Laden, 2004). Colleges and universities in Puerto Rico (56 nonprofit HSIs) were created with the express purpose of educating residents of the island, the majority of whom are Hispanic (Santiago, 2006), indicating distinct historical, political, and cultural foci than mainland institutions.” From: “[Realizing the Potential of Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Multiple Dimensions of Institutional Diversity for Advancing Hispanic Higher Education](#)”

[iv] [Congressional Research Service: Programs for Minority-Serving Institutions Under the Higher Education Act](#)

[v] For example, St. Philip's College in San Antonio, Texas meets HBCU and HSI definitions (student population is 20% African American and 50% Latino). D-Q University in Davis, California, meets the definition both of a TCU and an HSI (student population is one-third American Indian and one-third Latino).

[vi] [Latinos in Higher Education: Compilation of Fast Facts](#)

[vii] [Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions \(HSIs\): Serving Latino Students](#)

[viii] [Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report](#)

[ix] [Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report](#)

[x] [Minority-Serving Institutions: Serving All Students](#)

Updated September 2019