LATINO STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In 2017, 20% of traditional U.S. college students were Latino; the second largest ethnic group enrolled at the undergraduate level. While the number of Latino college students is increasing overall, these students continue to be overrepresented in open-access and community colleges and underrepresented in four-year institutions.

ENROLLMENT/DEGREE ATTAINMENT

- 36% of Latinos aged 18-24 enrolled in college in 2017, decreasing the enrollment gap between Latinos and Whites to 5 percentage points.
- Latino students tend to be concentrated in public institutions: 85% of Latino students enrolled in public institutions in 2016; a higher percentage than any other race/ethnicity group for that same year.
  - In fall 2018, 20% of Latino students were enrolled in public four-year institutions and 27% were enrolled in public two-year institutions.
- Completion rates are increasing among Latinos.
  - The percentage of Latinos aged 25-29 with at least an associate’s degree increased from 15% to 31% from 2000 to 2019.
    - The increase among White students of the same age who had earned at least an associate’s degree increased from 44% to 56% over the same time period, leaving the current attainment gap intact.
  - Latinos aged 25-29 who had attained at least a bachelor’s degree increased from 10% in 2000 to 21% in 2019.
    - By comparison, the proportion of White students of the same age with at least a bachelor’s degree increased more, from 34% to 45% over the same time period.
- Latino students are overrepresented in public 2-year associate’s degree programs.
  - As of fall 2018 27% of Latino students are in public 2-year associate’s degree programs, compared to 49% of White students, 6% of Asian students and 14% of African-American students.
- Latino students are underrepresented in bachelor’s degree programs.
  - As of fall 2018, 20% of Latino students are enrolled in public 4-year bachelor’s degree programs compared to 56% of White students, 8% of Asian students, and 12% of African-American students.
- Despite increased completion rates for Latinos overall, foreign-born Latinos are less likely to have earned an associate’s degree or bachelor’s degree than Latinos born in the United States.
  - As of 2009, 4% of the immigrant Latino population had earned associate’s degrees compared with 8% of the U.S. born Latino population.
  - As of 2012, 11% of the immigrant Latino population had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher compared with 18% of U.S. born Latinos.
FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

- Latino students often face many financial hurdles.
  - 60% of Latino students receive some type of federal aid, compared to 53% of White students, 44% of Asian students, and 73% of African-American students.
  - 40% of Latino college students receive a Pell grant. Overall, they make up 20% of all Pell grant recipients.
- 40% of Latinos holding at least an associate’s degree report having student loan debt.
- The average debt of a Latino graduate in 2012 was $23,441; that number rises to over $36,000 if the student attended a for-profit institution.
- A significant percentage of Latino students enter college as low-income students.
  - 34% of independent Latino students make less than $30,000 per year
  - 50% of dependent Latino students make less than $40,000 per year.

SOURCES


Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) 2018-2019. Excelencia in Education, April 2020

The Distribution of Grants and Scholarships by Race. FinAid.org, September 2011.


From Capacity to Success: HSIs, Title V and Latino Students. Excelencia in Education, May 2016.

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