



# Hispanic-Serving Institutions

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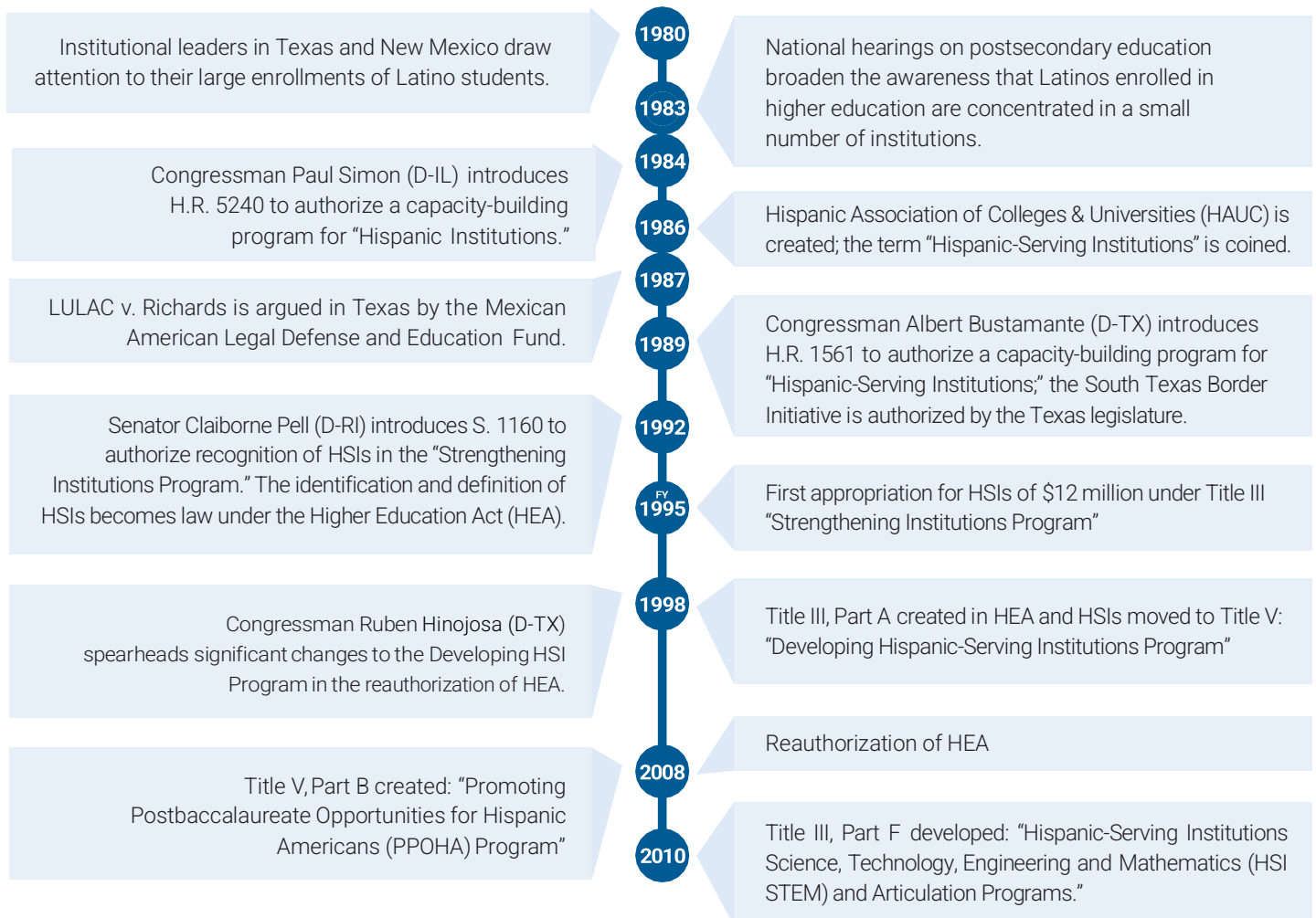
# A primer on Hispanic-Serving Institutions, what they are, who they serve, and the related federal grant program.

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 (a 246% increase between the 1980 and 2010 U.S. censuses),<sup>1</sup> 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, members of Congress created the designation for Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) to expand 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.



Source: *Excelencia in Education. (2014). Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Title V Funding Timeline. Washington, DC: Excelencia in Education.*

# HSI Grants

To become a designated HSI, an institution's undergraduate full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment must be at least 25% Hispanic and at least 50% of the Hispanic student body must be low income.<sup>ii</sup> The institution must be accredited, degree-granting, and a public or private non-profit college or university. While some MSIs—including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)—were explicitly created to serve specific populations, most HSIs were not. Most institutions become HSIs due to enrollment shifts over time.<sup>iii</sup>

HSI funds are not distributed by formula as they are for other MSIs. Institutions must apply for one of three HSI grants. The Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program grant, found in Title V, Part A, allows institutions to expand educational opportunities and improve attainment for Hispanic students. Institutions may use these funds in ways similar to those allowed by other Title III institutions, such as purchasing lab equipment, building new facilities, or growing their endowment, among others. Other activities include those designed to improve student services, create articulation agreements, and improve the financial literacy of students and their families. These grants are awarded for either one year or five years. In FY2019, the most recent award year available, 43 institutions received grants for the first time, while 180 received continuing funding of previous awards. A total of \$124 million in grants was issued.<sup>iv</sup>

The Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans Program grant, found in Title V, Part B, allows institutions to expand postbaccalaureate opportunities and improve postbaccalaureate attainment for Hispanic students, and increase both the number of program offerings and their quality. Institutions may use these funds in a similar manner as the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant, but they must focus on postbaccalaureate students and programs. In FY20, the most recent award year available, two new grants totaling \$1.2 million were awarded.<sup>v</sup>

The third and final HSI grant is the Hispanic-Serving Institutions – Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (HSI-STEM) and Articulation Programs, found in Title III, Part F. The HSI-STEM program is designed to increase the number of Hispanic and low-income students enrolled in STEM fields, and to develop transfer and articulation agreements between community colleges and four-year institutions in STEM programs. Institutions may use these funds to improve the quality of STEM programs through curriculum design and development; faculty development; new STEM research opportunities; improved student services; and enhanced STEM facilities. In FY2021, the last round of funding for this program, 101 awards totaling \$94.1 million in funds were distributed to institutions.<sup>vi</sup>

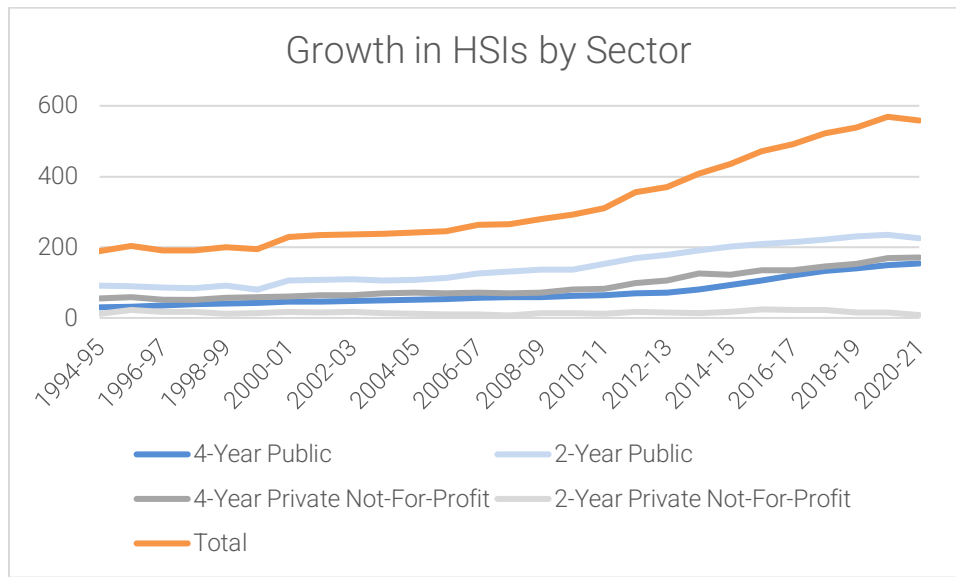
Before applying for Title V funds, institutions must first apply for an HSI designation. If approved, the institution enters a competitive process for a five-year grant. If the institution receives Title V funding, it becomes ineligible to also receive Title III funds.<sup>vii</sup> This is relevant 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.

## Types of Institutions

Nonprofit organizations like Excelencia in Education have compiled lists of HSIs and eHSIs (emerging HSIs) that have been recognized by the White House.<sup>viii</sup> Of the 559 HSIs in 2020–2021 listed by Excelencia in Education, 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 have FTE enrollments of under 3,000 students.<sup>ix</sup> There are 451 HSIs recognized and receiving federal funding.<sup>x</sup>



# Growth in HSIs by Sector, 1994–95 to 2020–21



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 18%. HSIs exist in 28 states, plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C., and are mostly concentrated in urban areas in five states (California, Texas, Arizona, Florida, and New York) and Puerto Rico.<sup>xi</sup>

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

## Emerging HSIs

Though emerging HSIs are not federally designated, many scholars and advocates take them into consideration when discussing HSIs. Emerging HSIs have 15–24.9% Hispanic enrollment and are likely to become HSIs soon after they’ve earned the emerging designation. In 2020–21, there were 393 emerging HSIs located in 41 states. When enrollment hits 25%, they are encouraged to apply for the HSI designation.<sup>xii</sup>

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

## Enrollment, Graduation & Retention

Hispanic student enrollment in higher education rose by 152% between 2000 and 2020 (from 1.5 million to 3.7 million)—a period in which overall enrollment increased only 24%.<sup>xiii</sup> At HSIs, enrollment increased 149% over the same time period while Latino enrollment at HSIs grew 174% to just under two million.<sup>xiv</sup> In Fall 2020, 54% of Latino undergraduates attended an HSI. At all institutions in Fall 2020, 55% of Latino students enrolled full-time and 45% enrolled part-time.<sup>xv</sup>

During the 2019-2020 academic school year, HSIs were responsible for graduating just over 49% of all Latino graduates in the United States.<sup>xvi</sup> Retention rates for all students at HSIs 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) a 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 is a significant number 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 2018–2019 were Latino (46%), while 26% were white, non-Hispanic, 9% were Black, and 9% were Asian.<sup>xvii</sup>

## 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:

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<sup>i</sup> [Minority-Serving Institutions: Serving All Students](#)

<sup>ii</sup> 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.

<sup>iii</sup> 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”](#)

<sup>iv</sup> [Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program – Title V](#)

<sup>v</sup> [Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans Program](#)

<sup>vi</sup> [Hispanic-Serving Institutions - Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics and Articulation Programs](#)

<sup>vii</sup> [Congressional Research Service: Programs for Minority-Serving Institutions Under the Higher Education Act](#)

<sup>viii</sup> [White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics.](#)

<sup>ix</sup> [Hispanic Serving Institutions \(HSIs\): 2020-21.](#)

<sup>x</sup> [2021 Digest of Education Statistics Table 312.40.](#)

<sup>xi</sup> [Hispanic Serving Institutions \(HSIs\): 2020-21.](#)

<sup>xii</sup> [Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions \(HSIs\): Serving Latino Students](#)

<sup>xiii</sup> [2021 Digest of Education Statistics Table 306.10.](#)

<sup>xiv</sup> 2002 and 2021 Digest of Education Statistics, [Tables 218](#) and [312.40](#), respectively.

<sup>xv</sup> [2021 Digest of Education Statistics Table 306.10.](#)

<sup>xvi</sup> 2021 Digest of Education Statistics, Tables [312.40](#), [321.20](#), [322.20](#), [323.20](#), and [324.20](#).

<sup>xvii</sup> [25 Years of Hispanic Serving Institutions \(HSIs\): A Glance on Progress.](#)