

# Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute

## 2003 ISSUES CONFERENCE

The following is a summary overview of a morning panel session and afternoon town hall discussion with a focus on K-16 education that took place September 22, 2003, in Washington, D.C.

Congressman Rubén Hinojosa, Chair of the Education Summit of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, convened the plenary session by sharing his perspective on the many challenges facing the thousands of Latino students in our public education institutions.

Leonard A. Valverde, of HBLI, served as the summit moderator. The panelists attending the summit represented a range of perspectives on the many important issues facing Latinos in the educational system:

- The Honorable Anasol Gutiérrez, Delegate Maryland General Assembly, District 18, Montgomery County, and Chair of the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
- Sally Stroup, Assistant Secretary at the Office of Postsecondary Education at the Department of Education
- Marylin McAdam, Co-Chair of the Hispanic Education Coalition (HEC) and President of McA Enterprises, Inc.
- Melissa Lazerin, Co-Chair of the Hispanic Education Coalition, Education Policy Analyst with the National Council of La Raza
- John Cole, President of the Texas Federation of Teachers

The following points were made by the panelists in their individual presentations.

- The educational attainment of Latinos in the United States continues to be an issue that demands immediate attention and continued commitment from Latino leaders and community members.

- There is need for Latino leaders, community members, parents, and policy makers, particularly local school board members, to develop a shared understanding of the many complex challenges facing Latino students. We can no longer engage in this battle as individual advocates in different camps. On the contrary, it is imperative that we come together around a logical agenda that represents a strategy that will be consistently echoed from statehouse to statehouse, as well as at the national and local levels.

- The Latino population is no longer regional, but national. There are states like Georgia and North Carolina that are experiencing an influx of Latino workers and communities. These cities do not have the infrastructure to serve or know how to serve Latino communities. Head Start requires community assessment, and such assessments will reveal the demographic shift that is taking place across this country. In so doing, Latino children in these emerging communities will gain much needed services

from Head Start programs. Currently, only 19% of eligible children and families are served through the existing migrant seasonal Head Start programs. This means that more than 80% of Latino children are not served. It is critical that more Latino children participate, because Head Start has shown how important it is to set a strong educational foundation. If funding of Head Start programs were increased from the current 4% to 5%, another 10,000 children could be served.

- Programs providing critical support for Latino students have experienced drastic cuts, particularly bilingual education, migrant education, and dropout prevention programs. Bilingual programs were cut by \$17 million, while HEP Camp, which is a dropout prevention program, was cut by an astounding 43%. This is particularly troubling when taking into account the unacceptably high dropout rates among Latino students. Compared to other ethnic groups, Latino dropout rates are the highest and have not decreased significantly since 1972.<sup>1</sup> In fact, only 54% of Latino students complete high school, compared to 78% of white students and 56% of African American students.<sup>2</sup>

- Higher education is connected to the K-12, but at the federal level this concept is not practiced.

- Access, affordability, and accountability in higher education continue to be the main issues facing Latino students.

- Beyond underrepresentation at the undergraduate level, Latinos continue to be even more underrepresented in graduate education programs, particularly in the doctoral, professional, and terminal degree programs. The Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) do very well in graduating Latino students. More than half of the Hispanic students in the country who earn college degrees receive them from HSIs. But upon examining graduate degrees earned, especially doctoral degrees, fewer than 3% go to Latino students. Because the majority of true HSIs are not doctoral granting institutions, only 1% of their degrees granted are at the graduate level, typically master's degrees.

The following policy recommendations were proposed to the CHC for future legislative consideration.

### Encourage Parental Involvement

Educational research and reform efforts have shown that parental involvement is a key factor in determining success. To that end, it is imperative that schools and educators promote and support parental involvement at all levels of education (K-16), as well as provide adequate information for parents so that they can effectively advocate for their children. Latino parents often find it difficult to be active participants in their child's education due to language issues and unfamiliarity with the U.S. educational system.

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## From the Top

### NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In preparing this newsletter, we began with the same intent as former newsletters and that we have followed in the past, i.e., we wanted to chronicle our activities in order to demonstrate our involvements, productivity, and our continued pursuance of our mission. In reading the contents, you will find we have done so. Shortly, I will give you a quick overview.

However, and more importantly, in reflecting on the contents of the newsletter, I began to think of the individuals we have met and interacted with during the course of our planned events. In so doing, I realized the impression they have made on, not just me, but on others as well. To be more exact, as the executive director, I am privileged to come in contact with numerous persons, varied in background, strong in character, with diverse experiences, and all accomplished and successful. They are school board members, educators, and administrators from across the k-16 continuum, elected officials from the local, state, and federal levels, business persons, civic leaders; and they all are from different states and cities. To try to capture

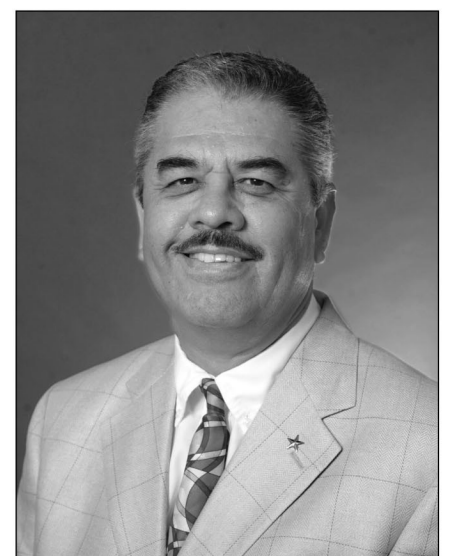
the high quality of persons engaged with HBLI, we start a new page called "Our Stories-Sí Se Puede." Here we provide stories of two persons, and we plan to continue these stories in future newsletters.

With regard to our activities, I want to highlight three for your consideration because they represent HBLI's continued development. The first is our newest programmatic initiative, which we call Early Start to College. The Lumina Foundation gave us seed funds to encourage 200 eighth- and ninth-grade Latino students from low-income communities to consider going to college. The program has been in operation for only six months and the response to our activities has been overwhelming, so much so, that over 500 students are participating. In addition, we are providing information to parents about financing their children's college education, and because over 90 percent of the parents speak only Spanish, we provide the information in both English and Spanish.

Second, Congressman Ciro Rodríguez, Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), asked me to moderate the all-day

session on education at the Washington, D.C., annual CHC Institute conference. The reason I bring this activity to your attention is because as the moderator what I heard from participants, who came from across the country, reinforced the original premise on which HBLI was founded in 1996. In short, the negative conditions still persist and our strategy of systemic change via change agents is needed more than ever before.

Third, our work with school board members through our leadership seminars continues to garner praise from the participants and our recognition by state associations is increasing. To name a few, we are connected to the Texas Mexican American School Board Association, California Latino School Board Caucus, NELI of the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, California School Board Association, Celebrating Opportunities Conference, and the Colorado Latino School Board Caucus. With a few of these we are formalizing our connections into relationships. While our format of intense engagement by board members with experts and providing alternative viewpoints on issues of import accommodates only



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a small number, it is a rich experience. This format has gained us support from the Western Regions Office of The College Board.

On behalf of the HBLI staff, I end by extending best wishes for the holidays. As is our custom, we give thanks to all those persons who contributed their time and efforts this past year to improving the education of Latinos, and we look forward to another productive year.

Feliz Año Nuevo

Leonard A. Valverde