

**EARLY START UNDERWAY**

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between colleges and universities. Mrs. De León provided valuable information about the variety of colleges and universities throughout Arizona. Several parents had questions about the admissions process and about college-bound programs. Parents were able to enjoy food and drinks after the presentation.

**COLLEGE RECRUITMENT NIGHT**

ESC held a College Recruitment Night for eighth- and ninth-grade students and their parents at Phoenix Preparatory Academy on October 28, 2003. Among some of the schools that participated were Tolleson High School, P. H. Gonzales, and Phoenix Preparatory Academy. Representatives from ten Arizona colleges and universities spoke to the crowd of approximately 80 parents and students about college entrance requirements and what made their specific college unique. Each university and college also set up informational booths so that parents and students could ask specific questions about each college. The event had a festive atmosphere

created by music performed by Mariachi Pasi3n and food catered by Mi Patio restaurant.

The second College Recruitment Night was held on November 5, 2003, at César Chávez High School, and over 100 students and parents attended. Students and parents from Gilliland Middle School, Stardust House, and César Chávez were invited to this event. Catering by El Mesquite restaurant and music performed by Mariachi Pasi3n provided families with a relaxed setting in which to speak directly to Arizona college and university representatives. During both events, ESC raffled off several prizes donated by the colleges to both parents and students. The goal of the College Recruitment Night was to provide parents and students an opportunity to speak directly to the college and university representatives and to inform them about the various colleges throughout Arizona. The college recruiters were very pleased with the turnout and as Ángela Chávez from South Mountain Community College said, “The students came up asking questions and were eager for information. The parents were excited to hear that

this was not solely for their students, that there are opportunities for them as well. Overall it was a great evening.”

The following are the principal contacts at each of our partner schools, colleges, and districts:

- Mr. Jacob Chávez, Principal, Gilliland Middle School
- Ms. Francisca Montoya, Executive Director, Stardust House
- Mr. Pete García, Assistant Principal, César Chávez High School
- Dr. Rebecca Valenzuela, Coordinator of Enrollment & Academic Advisement, Phoenix College
- Ms. Debra Gómez, Assistant Superintendent Tempe Elementary School District
- Ms. Isabel LeRoy, Coordinator of Instructional Programs South Mountain Community College
- Ms. Leticia Ruiz, Principal, Teacher Prep High School
- Mr. Jim Paxinos, Principal, P. H. Gonzales Elementary School
- Mr. Dan García, Counselor, Phoenix Preparatory Academy
- Ms. Consuelo Nava, Assistant Principal, Phoenix Preparatory Academy

- Mr. Josh Dean, Dean of Students, Tolleson High School
- Dr. Corina Gardea, President, Phoenix College
- Dr. James McElroy, Principal, César Chávez High School
- Dr. René Díaz, Superintendent, Phoenix Elementary School District
- Dr. Kent Scribner, Superintendent Isaac Elementary School District
- Ms. Lilly Schults, Counselor, Isaac Middle School
- Dr. Diane Hamilton, Superintendent Tolleson Elementary School District

The following are the numbers of students who are participating in the ESC activities:

César Chávez High School	100
Gilliland Middle School	88
P. H. Gonzales Elementary School	56
Isaac Middle School	73
Phoenix Preparatory Academy	64
Stardust House	32
Teacher Prep High School	17
Tolleson High School	56

**FORUM ON SUCCESS**

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experience is significant. Second, the type and quality of academic preparation and guidance in the K-12 grades most often determine success or failure in admission to and matriculation at the campus of choice. Third, once at a college or university campus, advising staff/services and faculty assistance will determine, for the most part, whether a Latino student prepares adequately for graduate or professional study. And finally, access to enrichment programs, undergraduate research opportunities, and other forms of “pre-graduate school preparation” activities are determinative at the level of post-baccalaureate attainment.

Latino parents and students need to learn as much as possible about selecting the best undergraduate college or university for the career desired, especially if the choice involves engineering, mathematics, or the sciences. Access to pertinent information about how to prepare for admission to the college or university of choice and then how to negotiate the system on the campus so as to graduate on time and with high grades are critical. There are sources of advice for Hispanics about going to college that can be found at community centers, public libraries, schools, outreach programs, and on the Internet. In addition, there are faculty and academic guidance personnel on most good campuses who will assist students in making informed decisions about career plans.

Eugene E. García in his presentation, “Better Informing Efforts to Increase Latino Student Success in Higher Education,” stated that it is widely recognized that expanding the number of Latinos who successfully pursue associate, bachelor’s, graduate, and professional degrees is one of the most important and complex challenges for U.S. colleges and universities. It is a particularly pressing priority for institutions of higher education in the Southwest, because a high percentage of the nation’s large and rapidly growing Latino population lives in that part of the country.

One promising way for the leaders of colleges and universities to develop more effective policies, programs, and practices for meeting this challenge at their institutions is to make much greater use of their student-oriented institutional research capacities-and, where necessary, to expand those capacities. Via the combination of large computerized databases and the Internet, it is now possible for colleges and universities to gather and combine a great deal of information about their students’ academic preparation for undergraduate and graduate education, their academic and other experiences while pursuing their degrees, and their academic progress and development. However, much more can and should be done. García’s recommendations focused mainly on the bachelor’s degree level, although they have relevance for efforts to improve outcomes at the associate degree and graduate and professional degree levels as well. He also stressed the importance of the Latino student’s academic preparation

before entering college, including Advanced Preparation courses and tests and the SATs.

Shernaz B. García and Patricia L. Guerra in their presentation “Deconstructing Deficit Thinking: Working with Educators to Create More Equitable Learning Environments” stated that an unwillingness on the part of schools to undertake change can often reflect attitudes of complacency on the part of educators, that their school is doing an adequate job in educating its students, or resignation that they can do no more to educate their students more effectively. Such assumptions often lead to efforts to superimpose programs designed for historically successful students and families on students and families from low-income and culturally/linguistically diverse (CLD) communities. When these efforts don’t produce the desired success, deficit beliefs are likely to be reinforced and the cycle repeats itself. In other words, school reform efforts stall or fail because deficit beliefs become a filter that blocks educators’ ability to examine their assumptions and to look beyond traditional solutions for real and meaningful change.

García and Guerra draw upon their research and development activities and field-based experiences with teachers and principals to begin to develop an empirically based framework for the deconstruction of deficit thinking among educators. Since 1996, they have collaborated in a series of activities focused on improving educational outcomes in schools with high enrollments of students from diverse

sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds. The work began with the Organizing for Diversity Project (ODP) at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) in Austin, Texas. Using a sociocultural framework, they challenged teachers—and subsequently administrators—deficit views about CLD students and families and asked them to redefine the presumed interrelationships between culture, teaching, and learning so that culture is viewed as the context in which teaching and learning occur for all students, not just children from subordinate sociocultural, racial, ethnic, or linguistic groups.

The teachers’ negative beliefs about students’ learning potential and family seem to have lowered their expectations for student performance as well as their response to students’ underachievement. Because the staff development experience created cognitive dissonance for some participants between their beliefs and assumptions and those reflected in culturally responsive pedagogy, they were confronted with the task of resolving these conflicts. Participants who did engage in this process demonstrated increased awareness of culture in educational settings, were able to question and often reject their previously held negative views, and were more likely to recognize their role in student learning and success. In turn, this appeared to lead to a readiness to examine instructional practices and to modify them to be more culturally responsive.

The complete papers will be published in *Education and Urban Society* in February 2004.