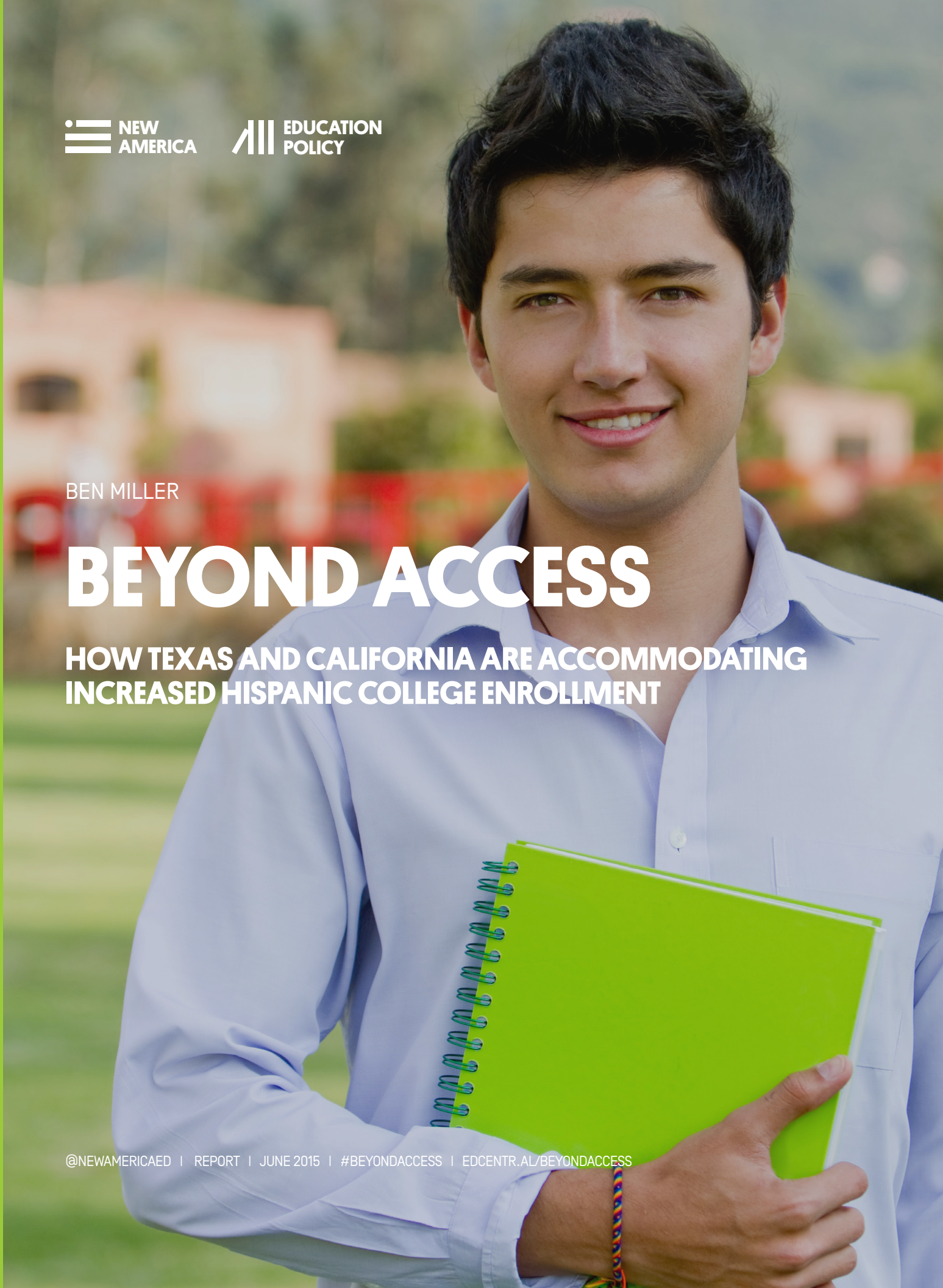

NEW AMERICA

EDUCATION POLICY

BEN MILLER

BEYOND ACCESS

HOW TEXAS AND CALIFORNIA ARE ACCOMMODATING INCREASED HISPANIC COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

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About the Author

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INTRODUCTION

Thirty years ago, the educational leaders of Santa Ana, California, saw that change was coming. Located about 30 miles southeast of Los Angeles, the city had gone from 15 percent Hispanic in the middle of the 20th century to 45 percent by the 1980 Census.[1] And the numbers were still climbing. Such growth presented a major educational challenge—Hispanic students had historically had poor academic outcomes and if the city did not start serving them better, then it could have significant ramifications for Santa Ana's future.[2]

So the heads of the four major educational institutions in the area—the Santa Ana Unified School District; Santa Ana College; California State University, Fullerton; and the University of California, Irvine—came together in 1983 and formed the Santa Ana Partnership, a group that would share data and identify areas where greater collaboration was needed to better serve students, particularly Hispanic students and other traditionally underserved individuals.[3]

That strong partnership has been crucial in the intervening decades for Santa Ana, a city of 334,000 that is now 78 percent Hispanic.[4] When it became clear that not enough students were college-ready, the partnership helped pave the way for making students take tougher classes in the early 2000s by placing students into a college-preparatory curriculum in high school and requiring algebra by eighth grade.[5] The partnership also added local businesses and community-based organizations to create a shared sense of responsibility for academic achievement.

Such efforts have paid off at the college level, even as the number of Hispanic students in the education pipeline has grown. The percentage of seniors from the Santa Ana Unified School District needing remediation because they were not ready for college-level work fell from 78 percent to 32 percent in English and from 79 percent to 51 percent in math between 2000 and 2012.[6] At Santa Ana College, the share of Hispanic students earning a grade of C or better rose from 59 percent in the fall of 1999 to 68 percent in the fall of 2013.[7] And from 2003 to 2011, the two-year retention rate for Hispanic students at California State University, Fullerton, rose from 67 percent to 81 percent, the third highest of any California State University campus.[8]

Santa Ana's success could serve as a model for colleges across the country, as the Hispanic undergraduate population at public institutions has surged from 1.2 million in 2000 to 2.3 million in 2013.[9] These increases are already having a major impact on America's colleges and universities. As first reported by the Pew Hispanic Research Center, Hispanic students with a high school degree are now more likely to enroll in college than their white or African-American counterparts.[10] Hispanics in 2011 surpassed African-Americans as the largest minority group on college campuses, including four-year institutions.[11] And the number of Hispanic students in college has continued to grow, even as overall postsecondary enrollment has fallen over the last few years.[12] This increased enrollment appears to be the result of more than just demographic changes, reflecting a real improvement in the high school completion and college-going rates for these students.[13]

Such enrollment gains present major opportunities and challenges. They provide a chance for communities across the country to follow the lead of places like Santa Ana and take concrete steps toward boosting the educational attainment rate for a group that has traditionally lagged behind others, potentially bringing the benefits of the middle class to many more individuals.

But there is a lot of work to be done. Currently, just 22 percent of Hispanic adults have a college degree.[14] That is less than half the rate for white adults.[15] And many Hispanic students live in states like California that already struggle with excess demand for postsecondary spots. Hispanic students are also more likely to attend two-year colleges, which can provide excellent postsecondary options but in some cases may not necessarily be well integrated with their four-year counterparts and the local high schools, preventing these students from making seamless transitions. And while a lot of this enrollment is occurring at institutions that have had sizable Hispanic populations for some time, a number of colleges also must adapt to becoming a place where Hispanic students make up the majority of students on campus, or are the largest minority group.

In short, colleges across the country are facing the same opportunities and risks that presented themselves to Santa Ana a few decades ago. Successfully serving this

growing number of Hispanic students could play a major role in future economic growth and prosperity and the ability of public colleges to fulfill their mission of serving students around them. Failing to do so, though, would make it much harder to achieve our national college attainment goals.

Unfortunately, it is hard to tell how colleges are handling this growth. Federal data are limited because they track outcomes only for full-time students entering college for the first time. This leaves out students who take classes part time or transfer in or out, populations that make up a significant share of students at community colleges and nonselective universities. For example, three-quarters of bachelor's degree graduates in Texas earned at least one credit hour from a two-year college, yet none of those colleges are given any credit for success in the federal data.[16] In addition, the outcomes indicators that do exist either take too long to measure success or are not disaggregated by race. And efforts to collect better data and construct cohorts that better measure success are thwarted due to a congressional ban on establishing a comprehensive student-level data system within the U.S. Department of Education. As a result, the federal government is flying blind when it comes to knowing how the millions of Hispanic students in college are faring.

Some states are capable of filling the information void. Buoyed by robust longitudinal data systems that can track students in more nuanced ways than the federal data, these states can provide detailed information about Hispanic student success that the federal government cannot. In particular, many of these databases can also generate data more rapidly—making it possible to identify successful or failing institutions while there may still be time to spread best practices or improve results.

To get a better sense of what these systems can tell us about the academic progression of Hispanic students, New America reviewed available data from the two states with the largest Hispanic populations—California and Texas. (See the spread on pages 4 and 5 for more on why we did not include other states.) We looked for data that could add nuance and fill in the blanks for what we cannot see at the federal level.

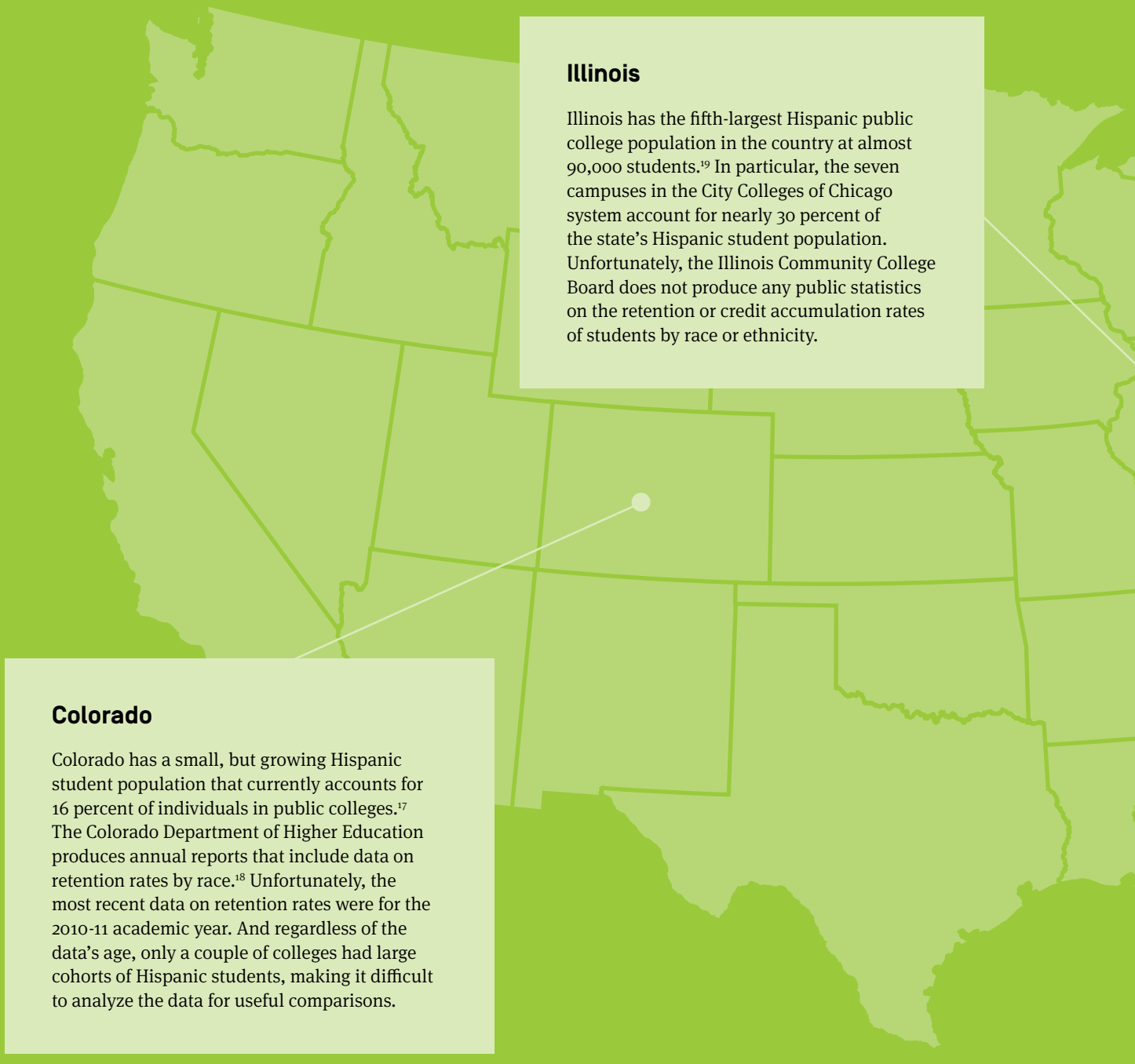
In particular, we focused on measures that can show more immediate changes, since indicators like graduation rates can take up to six years for a new cohort of students to work its way through and show improvements. In most cases, one- or two-year retention rates were the best data to fit this requirement. These are indicators that track the percentage of students who are still enrolled one or two years after beginning college. We also examined the percentage of students earning at least 30 credits within six years or earning passing grades in a semester, where available. We tracked results for both four- and two-year systems since 2000. And to get the story behind the numbers, we used that data to identify and interview institutions that have increased Hispanic enrollment and maintained or improved results.

The data and interviews present a range of stories. Some institutions are successfully handling the additional numbers of students through careful monitoring, a commitment to data, and constant experimentation. But other colleges are struggling to maintain results while their Hispanic student population is growing at a breakneck pace. This suggests that some colleges may not be sufficiently planning ahead for future enrollment increases, which should be foreseeable by examining trends in local school districts, and are instead acting after the students are already coming through the door.

All that is to say, the overall picture is never as simple as success or failure. The states and institutions identified each have their own unique sets of challenges and opportunities for serving Hispanic students and approach the problem through different lenses and incentives. But understanding what these are and how they've helped or hindered Hispanic student success for recent enrollees will be crucial in creating a road map for succeeding with future enrollment increases.

Other States Considered

In putting together this paper, we explored available data for a number of other states. Unfortunately, many of these states lacked sufficient public data, did not have enough colleges with sizable Hispanic student populations, or had data that were not well-suited for analysis. A description of some states considered but ultimately not used follows.



Illinois

Illinois has the fifth-largest Hispanic public college population in the country at almost 90,000 students.[19] In particular, the seven campuses in the City Colleges of Chicago system account for nearly 30 percent of the state's Hispanic student population. Unfortunately, the Illinois Community College Board does not produce any public statistics on the retention or credit accumulation rates of students by race or ethnicity.

Colorado

Colorado has a small, but growing Hispanic student population that currently accounts for 16 percent of individuals in public colleges.[17] The Colorado Department of Higher Education produces annual reports that include data on retention rates by race.[18] Unfortunately, the most recent data on retention rates were for the 2010-11 academic year. And regardless of the data's age, only a couple of colleges had large cohorts of Hispanic students, making it difficult to analyze the data for useful comparisons.

New York

New York State has the fourth-largest Hispanic public college population with over 122,000 students.[20] While the New York State Education Department does post retention rate data by race and ethnicity, it does not break these data down by institution.[21]

Florida

Florida has more than 190,000 Hispanic students enrolled in its public colleges and universities, the third-largest Hispanic college student population after Texas and California. In general, the state is known for having a high-quality data system that is capable of tracking students from high school through college and into the workforce. But it does not publicly release any information on retention rates or credit accumulation by race or ethnicity, making it difficult to judge the immediate success of Hispanic students. The Florida Department of Education was kind enough to run special extracts from its student unit record system to provide data on retention and completion for several cohorts of Hispanic students in Florida community colleges. These data, however, employ a very restrictive cohort, only measuring the results for students who earned either nine vocational credits or 18 credits applicable to an associate degree within two years of enrolling. Such restrictions dramatically reduce the number of students that can be measured and raise the success rates so high that it is hard to draw meaningful trends from them. Because of these concerns we decided that the data were not suitable for inclusion in the paper.

THE CHANGING INSTITUTIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

There has been enormous growth in the enrollment of Hispanic students nationally. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there were 2.3 million Hispanic undergraduate students in public colleges in fall 2013—638,000 more than in 2008. In fact, with an overall increase of about 749,000 undergraduate students in public higher education during that time, additional Hispanic enrollment accounts for about 85 percent of growth at public colleges in the last half decade.[22]

Extend the window back to 2000 and the trend is even more pronounced. Since fall 2000, the number of Hispanic students in public colleges has effectively doubled. Nearly one out of every two additional students on public college campuses since the beginning of George W. Bush's presidency was Hispanic.

Two-thirds of Hispanic students in public colleges are enrolled in two-year institutions, a share that has been largely unchanged for years.[23] These colleges enrolled 1.5 million Hispanic students in fall 2013 versus 806,000 in public four-year institutions. Though their share of Hispanic students has not changed, public four-year colleges have more than doubled the number of these students since fall 2000.

While these enrollment trends represent dramatic change on a national scale, more than half of the enrollment increases have occurred in just three states—California, Texas, and Florida. And California by itself accounted for nearly 30 percent of the increase. Those same states already had the highest enrollment of Hispanic students in fall 2008.

Similar to the state picture, Hispanic enrollment growth at the institutional level over the last five years appears to be a story of those with sizable populations increasing further. Out of more than 1,700 public two- and four-year colleges, only 67 saw their enrollment increase to at or above 25 percent Hispanic—one threshold used to identify a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). It is possible that the number of colleges earning the HSI designation could dramatically increase in the coming years. Excelencia in Education, a national nonprofit organization focused on Latino student success in higher education, identified nearly 300 colleges across 30 states where Hispanic students comprise between 15 and 24.9 percent of enrollment—institutions it calls "Emerging HSIs."[24]

Of course enrollment data alone are an insufficient indicator of success. While even obtaining some college can help boost earning potential, entering college without finishing still leaves students at a greater risk of unemployment, student loan default, and other negative events with potentially lasting consequences.[25] The ultimate goal must be ensuring that the hundreds of thousands of additional Hispanic students entering college are able to earn a credential that puts them on a path to a better life.

With completion as the lens for what we consider success, the nature and location of this enrollment increase has significant public policy implications. On the cost side, public colleges in Texas and California are typically cheaper than other state schools. While lower tuition cannot totally eliminate cost concerns for low-income students, it does mean Hispanic students will have options that are more affordable than what's offered in other states, such as those in the Northeast. Texas and California also have fairly strong policies around important issues such as credit transfer and articulation, which matter for students who start at a two-year school and hope to earn a bachelor's degree. States like California, however, have struggled to handle rising enrollment in a time of reduced funding, which has limited the number of spots in four-year universities that are available to students hoping to transfer from a community college.

More broadly, the fact that nearly two-thirds of Hispanic students at public colleges are in two-year institutions puts them in places with fewer resources and supports. While community colleges are an important resource, they receive less state funding, especially relative to their enrollment, than four-year institutions and not surprisingly then tend to have poorer outcomes. And since their ultimate success in many cases hinges on their students' ability to transfer and earn a bachelor's degree, community colleges are more at the whims of outside universities than are four-year institutions.

Different Definitions of Success

Gauging how the more than 600,000 additional Hispanic students are faring in college is not an easy task at the federal level. While the U.S. Department of Education reports outcome measures like graduation and retention rates, only the former is disaggregated by race. And the reported graduation rate has limited utility because it only measures students who follow the traditional attendance pattern of starting college full time in the fall without having ever enrolled anywhere else. It also treats anyone who transfers to another institution as having dropped out of his or her first college. This "first-time full-time" requirement is particularly ill-suited for tracking the success of Hispanic students and the institutions that are most likely to serve them. Almost 55 percent of all Hispanic students enrolled in college in 2011-12 were nontraditional students.[26] This means they had not gone to college straight from high school, attended part time, were married, had children, or worked full time, among other characteristics that do not match the stereotypical vision of a college student, thus making them less likely to be captured by graduation rate statistics.[27] Similarly, only about one-third of entering students at two-year public colleges—the type of institution most likely to enroll Hispanic students—are counted in the federal graduation rate.[28]

In the absence of better federal measures, state data systems are the only place left to turn for useful and more immediate results. The most robust state systems provide a number of advantages over federal data. Unlike federal data, which are aggregated by institution, state systems can hold student-level information. These student unit record systems, as they are known, can track individuals across all public institutions in a state. They can also be linked to databases showing credit accumulation, K-12 information, and sometimes even workforce results.

The advantage of these unit record systems is that states can construct cohorts that are not bound by the first-time full-time limitations in federal calculations. They can include transfer students and break out results for those who attend part time. The best of them can even disaggregate by whether students needed remedial coursework, were taking classes that counted toward a degree, and other characteristics that are important for getting a better measure of whether students who were truly attempting to graduate actually did so.

The downside of state data systems is that they are highly individualized. No two data systems may use quite the same measures. Even their public functionality can vary greatly. Unfortunately, this makes it more difficult to compare results across state lines and turns a national story into a set of more localized ones. Fortunately, the two states with the largest Hispanic student populations and the biggest increases in enrollment of these students over the last five years all have fairly robust data systems. While they may not be able to each tell comparable stories, they provide important insights into how we think of and measure student success and the very different challenges facing institutions of higher education across the country.

Additional Hispanic enrollment accounts for about 85 percent of growth at public colleges in the last half decade.

A Closer Look at Two States

To address the question of Hispanic student performance, we took a closer look at the results reported in two different states and three data systems: (1) the California Community College System, (2) the California State University System, and (3) the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. For the Texas data we looked at results for public four- and two-year colleges.

Because each state uses different cohort definitions and outcomes metrics it is not possible to directly compare results in California with those in Texas. Each state, however, shows its own trend. In California, the results are by and large positive, with many institutions showing modest improvements in retention and success rates and slightly more varied outcomes in terms of credit accumulation. The direction is not as good in Texas, where only a few institutions have increased retention rates and some of the fastest-growing campuses have seen results decline.

The following sections discuss the results for each state and system in greater detail.

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

One out of every four Hispanic students in public higher education attends a California community college.[29] These institutions enrolled 600,000 Hispanic students in fall 2013. Since fall 2000, these schools have added over 250,000 more Hispanic students.

The California Community College System has arguably one of the most impressive public data interfaces for postsecondary education in the country.[30] This system is known as the Data Mart and is run by the California Community Colleges' Chancellor's Office. The Data Mart can present a range of student outcomes both at the institutional and programmatic level. In particular, the data system can track not just the retention rate of students but whether they were academically successful in each term or semester. It also produces the information for a Community College Scorecard, which tracks schools on a number of easy-to-understand indicators, such as the share of students who earn a degree or successfully transfer to a four-year institution.[31]

One out of every four Hispanic students in public higher education attends a California community college.

The Data Mart further stands out in its disaggregation and cohort options. Not only can it split data out by race, but it offers the ability to analyze the data for students who are taking courses toward a degree or transfer versus those who are in other types of courses, such as some vocational offerings. This is an important distinction in community colleges, where many students may be enrolled in courses that are not designed to ultimately build to a credential (such as continuing education courses for adults). It can also show separate results for students based upon whether they were prepared for college. These distinctions make it possible to get a better sense of where colleges may be succeeding and where they need to do better at a significant level of detail.

This analysis relies upon a combination of measures from the Community College Scorecard and the Data Mart. Both sources are used as a way of getting more immediate and longer-term results. The Scorecard data tend to be a bit older because they track students for six years, meaning that the most recent set of data tracks students who entered in 2007-08 through the 2012-13 school year. The Data Mart, meanwhile, can track the results for students in a single term, making data available as recently as students who enrolled in the fall of 2013.

More specifically, this analysis relies upon two indicators from the Scorecard and one from the Data Mart. The first Scorecard indicator is a persistence rate, which is defined as the percentage of students who either earned a degree or certificate or enrolled for their first three consecutive semesters or quarters. The second is the credit accumulation rate, which looks at the percentage of students who earned at least 30 credits within six years of enrolling. Both metrics only include students who enrolled for the first time, earned at least six credits, and attempted either math or English in their first three years of enrollment.[32] The Data Mart measure is a success rate that looks at the percentage of students in a given term who did not earn failing grades.[33] This measure only includes students attending in person and courses applicable to a degree.

Overall, the three indicators show that results for Hispanic students have been heading in a positive direction, albeit at a slow pace. Surprisingly, the credit accumulation measure had the most positive change of any measure, even though it represents a tougher bar for success. It showed that from 2003-04 to 2007-08 the percentage of Hispanic students earning at least 30 units increased from 60.7 percent to 63.2 percent. That 2.5 percentage point increase for Hispanic students is a bigger improvement than the overall system's credit accumulation rate. And though Hispanic students still lag behind their white peers with regard to the overall

Table 1

Percentage of California Community College Students Earning 30 Credits

Start End	2003-04 2008-09	2004-2005 2009-2010	2005-2006 2010-2011	2006-2007 2011-2012	2007-08 2012-13	Change from 03-04 to 12-13
African-American	54.0%	54.1%	55.5%	55.7%	56.1%	+2.1%
Asian	72.5%	71.6%	72.6%	72.9%	73.2%	+0.7%
Hispanic	**60.7%**	**60.9%**	**61.8%**	**62.8%**	**63.2%**	**+2.5%**
White, non-Hispanic	67.5%	67.7%	68.7%	69.0%	69.0%	+1.5%
Overall	65.0%	64.9%	65.9%	66.3%	66.5%	+1.5%

Source: New America analysis of data from the California Community College Chancellor's Office's Management Information Systems Data Mart.

accumulation rate, they've shown greater improvement over the last five cohorts.

A further encouraging finding from the credit accumulation data is that the Hispanic students who appear to be improving are those who are less prepared for college. The share of students needing remediation who earned at least 30 credits increased from 59.6 percent to 62.4 percent, even as the total number of students in the cohort grew by more than 13,000. In contrast, the percentage of prepared students earning 30 credits stayed largely constant, going from 67.2 percent to 67.6 percent.

Though Hispanic students appear to be earning larger numbers of credits, the persistence data are effectively flat, showing a small drop of half a percentage point to 69.3 percent. And while the minor decrease in rates for Hispanic students is disappointing, overall persistence rates had a similarly slight decline.

The share of students achieving academic success in the fall term showed by far the biggest increases. From the fall of 2000 to the fall of 2013, the success rate of Hispanic students increased from 62.4 percent to 67.4 percent. This increase is slightly greater than that observed for the state overall, though it is a bit less than the change for white students.

California is of course a massive state and the overall figures mask significant variation among colleges. For example, Cerritos College in Norwalk saw an increase in the rate at which Hispanic students earned 30 credits by 4.5 percentage points. It also increased the success rate of Hispanic students by 10 percentage points from the fall of 2007 to the fall of 2013. And it did this while seeing the fifth-largest increase in Hispanic students of all California community colleges.

According to JoAnna Schilling, the vice president of academic affairs and assistant superintendent at Cerritos College, the improved results are at least partially due to an increased emphasis on ensuring that students have the skills they need to succeed in more demanding

Table 2

Persistence Rate of California Community College Students

Start End	2003-04 2008-09	2004-2005 2009-2010	2005-2006 2010-2011	2006-2007 2011-2012	2007-08 2012-13	Change from 03-04 to 12-13
African-American	64.8%	64.6%	63.9%	64.4%	64.5%	-0.3%
Asian	74.3%	74.5%	74.1%	74.7%	74.4%	+0.1%
Hispanic	**69.8%**	**69.2%**	**68.6%**	**68.9%**	**69.3%**	**-0.5%**
White, non-Hispanic	71.5%	71.4%	71.3%	71.3%	71.7%	+0.2%
Overall	70.9%	70.6%	70.1%	70.3%	70.5%	-0.4%

Source: New America analysis of data from the California Community College Chancellor's Office's Management Information Systems Data Mart.

academic environments.[34] While these efforts have included multiple programs, the most notable is called iFALCON, an acronym that stands for focus, advance, link up, comprehend, organize, and new ideas.[35] Developed by Cerritos faculty and launched in 2009, iFALCON teaches students important study skills, including time management, working with peers to grasp concepts, and related activities. It also stresses more basic things like the importance of going to class and preparing beforehand.

The other important change at Cerritos was the creation in 2011 of a student success center. It provides a space where students can get one-on-one tutoring in areas like math or English, participate in group workshops on topics like study skills, and also use computer-based learning tools.[36] Use of the success center has increased substantially over time, and the college now estimates that 10,000 students use the center in some way each semester.[37] A review of the center's data in 2012 showed that Hispanic students make up a larger share of center visitors than they do of the overall college population.[38]

Two other strands of Cerritos' work stand out. First, the college is working on improving parental outreach. The college makes sure parents understand that although students spend fewer hours in class than they did in high school they cannot use all that extra time for jobs because they have to study more.[39] Cerritos has tried to amplify this message through a coaching corps, which asks students to find an academic mentor outside of the college. This is now part of the college's version of Puente Program, a California program that tries to improve college-going for underprepared students.[40]

Second, Cerritos is placing a greater emphasis on working to improve the bridge between K-12 and higher education. For example, it works with six area high schools to completely matriculate students before they finish high school—meaning they have done their orientation, filled out their financial aid applications, and have an education plan with guaranteed spots in courses and a freshman year experience.[41] Students are also required to participate in a summer college success course before starting in the fall. The hope is that reaching students

while they are a more captive audience in high school will smooth the transition to college.

Many of the themes at Cerritos around study skills, greater K-12 connection, and more hands-on support for students are present at other California community colleges with improving results. Santa Ana College, for example, places a particular emphasis on working with its community—an outgrowth of the Santa Ana Partnership founded 30 years ago.

One of the most noteworthy outcomes of the partnership in recent years is a change in 2000 to the Santa Ana Unified School District's educational requirements. It made a rigorous college preparatory curriculum the default track for high school students, requiring them to take three years of math.[42] The district also started putting all seventh-graders into pre-algebra and all eighth-graders into algebra.[43] The work behind the standards change did not just rest with the K-12 system. High school and college math instructors worked together to ensure alignment between what was taught in junior and senior years and the start of higher education.

Assisted at least partly by this change, the proportion of seniors from the Santa Ana Unified School District who

Table 3

Changes in Persistence and Credit Accumulation at Select California Community Colleges

College	Percentage of students entering in 2007-08 who earn 30 units by 2012-13	Change from 2003-04	Percentage of students entering in 2007-08 persisting by 2012-13	Change from 2003-04	Percentage successful in Fall 2013	Change from Fall 2007
Chaffey College	60.4%	+5.2%	70.2%	-0.6%	69.6%	+8.9%
El Camino	63.0%	+7.5%	68.2%	-1.8%	65.8%	+6.3%
East Los Angeles	64.2%	+4.7%	69.9%	+1.3%	65.2%	+7.9%
Fullerton	67.6%	+3.4%	79.5%	+2.8%	64.7%	+6.9%
Fresno City	61.9%	+1.7%	75.9%	+2.8%	65.3%	+8.4%
Palomar	57.5%	-1.2%	65.8%	+3.8%	67.5%	+2.5%
San Joaquin Delta	67.8%	+5.4%	76.3%	+6.9%	65.9%	+1.3%

Source: New America analysis of data from the California Community College Chancellor's Office's Management Information Systems Data Mart.

did not need remediation increased from 22 percent to 68 percent in English and from 21 percent to 49 percent in math between 2000 and 2012.[44]

Santa Ana College also emphasizes internal data collection and evaluation. According to Sara Lundquist, the vice president for student services at Santa Ana, the college monitors semester-by-semester retention rates and achievement results, and identifies where gaps might lie.[45] And it uses metrics to set specific goals for academic departments. Four years ago the college started holding a second convocation for faculty right before the second semester starts where the president lays out institution-wide goals for success and persistence.[46] The president also recognizes departments that have met their goals or improved, giving direct recognition to their work without explicitly calling out those that came up short.

The combination of all these efforts appears to be helping the college do a better job serving Hispanic students. From 2003-04 to 2007-08, the percentage of Hispanic students earning at least 30 credits rose from 60.3 percent to 63.6 percent. The student success rate rose from 59 percent in the fall of 1999 to 68 percent in the fall of 2013. And the persistence rate stayed largely constant even as the number of Hispanic students in the cohort increased by 30 percent.

Santa Ana and Cerritos are far from the only California community colleges showing improvements for Hispanic students. A few other notable institutions are included in Table 3 on page 11. All of these colleges also showed an increase in the number of Hispanic students served during this time.

These examples demonstrate the complexity of using multiple measures to gauge college success. For example, Palomar College, which is located north of San Diego, had one of the biggest increases in persistence rates from the cohort that began in 2003-04 to the one that started in 2007-08. But it had far more modest changes in the rate at which students succeeded in the fall semester and saw the percentage of its students earning 30 credits actually drop. By contrast, El Camino College, which is between Long Beach and Los Angeles, had a big jump in the rate at which students earn 30 credits, but actually had a decrease in its persistence rate.

Not all California Community Colleges demonstrated improvement. For example, the credit attainment rate at Sacramento City dropped by nearly 4.5 percentage points from 2003-04 to 2007-08, while the number of Hispanic students in the cohort grew by 60 percent. Similarly, the persistence rate at Santa Rosa Junior College fell by more than 12 percentage points during that same time. While none of these colleges are close to being the biggest enrollers of Hispanic students, they do show the challenges involved in educating a growing number of Hispanic students.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The 23 campuses in the California State University (CSU) System enrolled more than 136,000 Hispanic students in fall 2013. That is 45,000 more than were enrolled in fall 2008. Today, one out of every three students on a CSU campus is a Hispanic student.[47]

Data on the CSU schools are not as rich as what are available for community colleges in the state. But the CSU system does release two indicators for measuring Hispanic student success. One is a measure of persistence that improves upon the federal retention rate by tracking first-time students attending full time for two years and differentiating the results by race and ethnicity.[48] The second is the retention and completion rate for all students transferring in from community colleges as a sophomore or higher, regardless of whether they are full or part time.[49] Combined, the two measures present a way to get a sense of how homegrown freshmen and transfer students are faring in college.

Overall, the data show positive trends for both first-time and transfer students. In the fall of 2003, nearly 79 percent of first-time full-time Hispanic students returned after one year. By 2012 that rate had increased to just over 83 percent. The two-year retention rate showed a similar change from 68.8 percent in 2003 to 72.4 percent in 2011, an increase of just over 3.5 percentage points.

Persistence rates for community college transfers tell a similar tale. From 2003 to 2012, the one-year retention rate increased by 2.9 percentage points to 86.4 percent. More impressive, the percentage of students who either graduated or were still enrolled after two years grew by nearly 5 percentage points to 80.2 percent by 2011.

While the increases are positive steps, Hispanic students' improvement on both measures lagged behind the figures for their white peers. As a result, the performance gap between Hispanic and white students at the CSU system actually widened from 2003 to 2011.

Campus-level results indicate several institutions where the performance of Hispanic students particularly improved. The most noteworthy is CSU, Fullerton, where the two-year retention rate for first-time Hispanic students rose by 14 percentage points to 80.9 percent from 2003 to 2012. And not only did results for Hispanic students improve, but the school served 90 percent more in each cohort. This improvement far outpaced the change in results for white students, closing the 5.6 percentage-point gap in performance to less than 0.8 percentage points. Overall the college's three-year retention rate is now higher than the one-year figure was a decade ago.[50] The results for Hispanic students who transferred into the college also improved, albeit with a more modest 5.5 percentage-point increase in the two-year graduation or continuation rate.

Today, one out of every three students on a CSU campus is a Hispanic student.

José Cruz, the provost and vice president for academic affairs at Fullerton, cited a combination of internal and external efforts that helped his school do a better job serving students. The entire California State University System has been making efforts over the past several years to help students get college ready before they even start classes. This starts with the Early Assessment Program, which adds questions to students' 11th-grade exams to identify if they are going to need remediation when they get to college. Underprepared students can then get additional instruction in their senior year of high school.[51] Students who are not college ready can also get help through extra coursework during the summer before classes begin using the Early Start Program.[52] The same basic idea applies to both the early start and assessment programs—get to students and identify their college-readiness needs before they are also trying to finish credit-bearing classes.

Fullerton also took a closer look at its internal data to identify large numbers of low-income and Hispanic students who were enrolled in the fall but did not show up in the spring semester. The college worked with departments across the campus to contact these

Table 4

California State University System Retention Rates Over Time

Fall	One-Year Retention Rate	One-Year Retention Rate	Two-Year Retention Rate	Two-Year Retention Rate
	White Students	Hispanic Students	White Students	Hispanic Students
2003	82.4%	78.9%	71.8%	68.8%
2004	83.1%	79.2%	72.1%	69.0%
2005	81.3%	77.5%	70.5%	67.2%
2006	81.0%	76.4%	70.0%	66.4%
2007	80.5%	76.5%	70.4%	65.2%
2008	82.1%	77.2%	73.1%	68.5%
2009	84.2%	80.2%	75.1%	71.8%
2010	85.7%	81.9%	76.0%	72.9%
2011	86.1%	81.0%	77.0%	72.4%
2012	86.6%	83.1%	N/A	N/A

Source: New America analysis of data from the California State University Graduation Rates Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange.

individuals by phone and find out why they did not come back.[53] Cruz said some students simply did not realize that they needed to register for courses or didn't understand what it took to return for the next semester. The college also created a student success dashboard that is able to track information about students in real-time.[54] The system updates each night and can generate reports on the enrollment, persistence, and completion rates of student cohorts based upon factors like transfer status, parental education level, gender and race or ethnicity.[55] The system can also provide information on individual students such as credits attempted and earned, academic standing, the initial and current major, and anticipated graduation date. This makes it easier to identify students who are falling behind and ensure that students are fulfilling necessary credit requirements to graduate, among other uses.[56]

CSU, Long Beach, another campus that has improved its retention rates for Hispanic students, has pursued similar efforts to those at Fullerton, but also placed a strong emphasis on smarter budgeting. The foundation of these efforts is the university's "Highly Valued Degrees Initiative," which was started in the mid-2000s. According to David Dowell, the interim provost and senior vice president in the Division of Academic Affairs, one key part of this initiative was a change in the budgeting practices that fully funded all the classes being offered before addressing other priorities.[57] Dowell said the model "allowed me to tell deans and associate deans that anything you can fill, I will help pay for," letting the individual colleges offer courses that students need to graduate. The university also began including graduation goals in its annual strategic planning process and utilized new data tools to track academic outcomes at the department level.

Such efforts appear to be having an effect on retention rates at the campus. From fall 2000 to fall 2011 the two-year retention rate for first-time Hispanic students increased from 69.2 percent to 81.9 percent, a greater increase than the results for all students over the same time period.[58] And that improvement came even as the share of students at Long Beach who are Hispanic increased from 22 percent to 34 percent.[59]

Beyond budgeting work, Dowell said Long Beach has also placed a greater emphasis on similar efforts mentioned by other campus leaders. For example, the college offers proactive advising, in which students are given a clearer pathway for them to follow for each major instead of a "1960s cafeteria model," where students can pick and choose whatever they want.

Two other campuses stand out in particular for their improved results with transfer students. Both CSU, San Jose, and CSU, Los Angeles, increased the percentage of their Hispanic transfer students who graduated or were still enrolled after two years by more than 10 percentage points. As a result, four out of every five transfer students at both campuses have some measure of success after two years.

Unfortunately, the story is not positive at all CSU institutions. Both East Bay and Humboldt had two-year persistence rates for first-time Hispanic students that were more than 8 percentage points lower in 2011 than they were in 2003. These decreases suggest the colleges are still working to accommodate increased numbers of Hispanic students. Both campuses started with relatively few Hispanic students but then had a more than threefold increase in their numbers. As a result, both schools saw their persistence rates dip even lower in the mid-2000s before rebounding slightly in more recent years.

California State University, Long Beach created a new funding model that allowed interim provost David Dowell to say "anything you can fill, I will help pay for."

TEXAS

Texas has the second-largest population of Hispanic undergraduate students after California. Texas enrolled more than 439,000 Hispanic undergraduates in its public colleges and universities in fall 2013, an increase of 119,000 since 2008. This growth is particularly apparent at the state's community colleges, which enrolled 282,000 Hispanic students in 2013, 150,000 more than they did in fall 2000. And from fall 2008 to 2013, the three public colleges with the largest increases in Hispanic enrollment in the nation were all in Texas.[60]

Much like California, Texas has a fairly robust data system capable of tracking a wide variety of higher education data. This ranges from common outcomes like graduation rates to more complex measures, such as the percentage of students passing licensing or certification exams and the rate at which bachelor's-degree holders find jobs or go to graduate school. It also includes financial indicators like how efficient the college is in using its space or its spending per student.

Though the bulk of Texas' data indicators are not broken down by race or ethnicity, it does have two persistence measures that provide a snapshot of how Hispanic students are faring after one or two years in college. The cohort for these measures follows the limited definitions used by the federal government—it only includes full-time students who are attending college for the first time in the fall. But the data are better than what is available at the federal level because the system is capable of tracking results for students who transfer to other Texas institutions, thus generating a measure of statewide persistence, not just a single college snapshot.

Overall, the statewide persistence data suggest Texas is having some difficulties accommodating the additional numbers of Hispanic students. From 2000 to 2012, the two-year persistence rate for Hispanic students at two-year public institutions fell from 53.3 percent to 51.1 percent. Results were better at four-year colleges, where the persistence rate increased by almost a percentage point, to 78.3 percent.

A closer look at the data reveals two noteworthy trends that add complexity to the overall story. The first is that many colleges improved their persistence rates during the depths of the recession, suggesting that a lack of jobs may have encouraged more students to stay in school. For example, the two-year persistence rate for Hispanic students at community colleges in 2008 was over 4 percentage points higher than it was in 2012. At four-year institutions, the rate was 2 percentage points higher. It is possible that the weak economy may have encouraged students to stay in college, but it is unfortunate to see colleges unable to maintain those results as jobs return.

From fall 2008 to 2013, the three public colleges with the largest increases in Hispanic enrollment in the nation were all in Texas.

Texas Community Colleges

One difficulty in interpreting retention data is they can change much more year-to-year than graduation rates. South Texas College, for example had a two-year retention rate of 50 percent for Hispanic students in 2000, but by 2004 it had fallen to 44 percent. The retention rate rebounded in 2008 to 56 percent, but by 2012 it had fallen back down to 43 percent.

South Texas College is a young institution that has grown from 1,000 students to 31,000 since its establishment in 1993. The school was founded to provide more postsecondary opportunities for the 700,000 mostly Hispanic individuals living close to the Mexican border near the southern tip of Texas. According to Shirley Reed, the college's first and only president to date, the school's youth has been an asset in several ways. For example, the lack of long-standing relationships made the college aggressive in finding partnerships for collaboration. This has included things like the 2004 creation of dual-enrollment programs, which have now grown to include 13,000 students a year.[61] According to Reed, these early opportunities for accumulating college

credit have had major effects on students, their parents, and their teachers in increasing self-esteem, and showing that college is attainable and that students can succeed at the next academic level. These kinds of efforts have also helped drop the percentage of students needing developmental education from as high as 70 percent during the school's first few years down to about 13 percent today.[62]

Because South Texas College had been seeing significant improvements in its retention rates for Hispanic students, the drop in this measure from 2008 to 2012 caught the school off guard. Reed said the institution has looked at its data but still cannot tell exactly what might have caused the drop. She did note that retention rates have been affected by the economy in past business cycles, but that poverty in general is going to have an effect on whether students will have the time and money to go into higher education or instead need to work to support their family.

Regardless of the factors affecting the decrease, South Texas College has spent the past several years working hard to bring the rate back up. It has added more student success centers, more proactive advising, academic coaches, and tutoring opportunities.[63] It is also making use of inexpensive technological solutions, such as texting students to maintain communication and offering degree planning software that can help students stay on a path to completion.[64] While these efforts have yet to show up in the two-year retention rate, the one-year retention rate for fall 2013, the most recent figure available, increased by nearly 6 percentage points, to 62.3 percent.

South Texas College is far from the only Texas community college to see a similar pattern of fluctuations in the retention rate for Hispanic students, as the table below shows.

The up-and-down pattern before and after the recession

Table 5

Two-Year Persistence Rates for Hispanic Students at Select Texas Community Colleges

Institution	2000	2008	2012
Brazosport College	64%	75%	62%
Central Texas College	49%	52%	43%
North Lake College	54%	58%	53%
El Paso	54%	60%	51%
Lee College	68%	73%	58%
Navarro College	57%	61%	50%

Source: New America analysis of Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board data.

suggests that the economy may have some degree of influence on the ability of two-year colleges to retain and graduate students. That should further highlight the need for colleges to show their value so that the immediate payoff of job opportunities does not pull students out of school. In particular, colleges should provide programs that have clear workplace value for students whose primary motivation for attending college may be employment related.

The second finding in the data is more troubling. Many of the colleges with the greatest increases in Hispanic student enrollment also recorded significant drops in persistence rates for these students. This phenomenon appears to be prevalent at institutions that did not historically have a significant Hispanic population, meaning they may still be figuring out what they need to do to serve these students well.

The Lone Star College System in the northern parts of Houston exhibits the struggles with accommodating Hispanic student growth. The school enrolled 5,800 Hispanic students in the 1999-2000 school year—about 13 percent of the student body. By the 2012-13 school year, Hispanic enrollment had nearly quadrupled to more than 28,500 students—29 percent of enrollment. Yet two-year persistence rates for Hispanic students fell from 63 percent in 2000 to 55 percent in 2012.

As the table below shows, other colleges with substantial increases in their Hispanic student populations also saw their persistence rates drop. For example, the Austin Community College District added more than 11,000 Hispanic students from 2000 to 2012, but its two-year persistence rate declined by 17 percentage points. The El Paso Community College District saw an increase of 10,000 Hispanic students coincide with a 2 percentage-point decline in persistence rates.[65]

Table 6

Changes in Institutional Demographics and Persistence Rates at Select Texas Community Colleges

Institution	Percent Hispanic 2012-13	Change in Percent Hispanic 2000-01	Change in Two-Year Persistence (2000 to 2012)
Odessa College	57%	+18%	-10%
Dallas County	29%	+9%	-7%
Lone Star College System District	29%	+16%	-10%
Amarillo College	26%	+11%	-4%
Austin Community College	27%	+8%	-17%
El Paso Community College	83%	+7%	-2%

Source: New America analysis of Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board data.

Some colleges have shown how they can adapt to increased Hispanic student enrollment over time. Tarrant County College District in Fort Worth added nearly 15,000 Hispanic students from 1999-2000 to 2012-13, nearly doubling its share of enrollment to 24 percent. While its two-year persistence rate for Hispanic students dipped from 2003 to 2010, the college has since boosted its rate back to 58 percent—where it was at the turn of the century.

Learning to better serve Hispanic students will not just happen automatically. The results at Texas community colleges strongly suggest that many institutions must be more intentional about how they serve emerging populations.

In particular, the school's return to higher retention rates began after the fall of 2010, when Tarrant County College started taking a closer look at data. That year, the school joined Achieving the Dream, a national network of community colleges that is trying to improve outcomes through evidence-based practices.[66]

According to Joy Gates Black, the vice chancellor for academic affairs and student success at Tarrant County College, the administration was not happy with what a review of its success data found. The results showed that two groups in particular were not succeeding—African-American and Hispanic men.[67] The school then conducted focus groups with students to try to determine what might be going wrong. "The most important thing is that we owned it," Gates Black said. "We've stood up and said these student groups are the least successful and this is what we are going to do about it."

Some of the issues that led to an initial retention rate drop actually resulted from state policy changes. In 2003, the state of Texas passed the Texas Success Initiative, which gave institutions more flexibility around remedial coursework.[68] In response, Tarrant County allowed students needing those classes to delay enrolling in them and instead take college-level offerings.[69] But postponing remedial courses just meant students were not completing them in a timely manner, causing problems with completion. So the college started requiring remedial courses to be completed right away. To help students adjust to this change, the college also created special math "emporiums" on each campus—a way of teaching math pioneered at Virginia Tech that allows students to complete problem sets by themselves on a computer while receiving on demand-tutoring assistance.[70]

Tarrant County changed a number of other policies. It stopped allowing students to register late for classes because data showed students who did so fared much worse than those who registered on time.[71] It started requiring students to meet at least twice a semester with an adviser and created more tutoring resources. And it hired special success coaches on each campus to connect students with resources when they get on campus. The school also redesigned its new-student orientation program after discovering that students were receiving inconsistent information.

Not all the changes were focused on students; some dealt with faculty and staff. The school gave faculty the ability to drop students who missed more than 13 percent of a course as a way of placing a greater emphasis on attendance.[72] It also added another 24 hours of professional development requirements for full-time faculty. And the college created a student development and success institute that brings in speakers to talk about new ways of teaching that could increase success.

Two other Texas community colleges stand out for improvements in their Hispanic student results: the Alamo Community College District in San Antonio; and Alvin Community College, which is south of Houston. The former saw a 6 percentage-point improvement in its two-year persistence rates from 2000 to 2012, while the latter went up by nearly 8 percentage points.

Overall, the uneven results at Texas community colleges are disconcerting given that they had already enrolled large numbers of Hispanic students and will likely educate a growing share of them into the future. In a best-case scenario these declines in persistence rates reflect short-term adjustments as colleges figure out how to handle this new enrollment reality. If that is the case, then rates should hopefully improve over time. But learning to better serve Hispanic students will not just

happen automatically. The results at Texas community colleges strongly suggest that many institutions must be more intentional about how they serve emerging populations.

Texas Four-Year Institutions

Texas' four-year public colleges have a smaller share of students who are Hispanic than their community college counterparts. But these students still make up one-third of enrollment at these institutions, a steep increase from one-fifth in 2000. Overall, the number of Hispanic students in Texas' four-year public colleges has more than doubled, to 160,080 individuals, since 2000-01.

Statewide, the enrollment growth appears not to have had much effect on the two-year retention rate for Hispanic students. In 2000, 77.4 percent of Hispanic students were still enrolled after two years. By 2012, it was 78.3 percent. Similar to community colleges, the four-year institutions saw their retention rates increase during the recession from 2007 through 2009. But even then the results never changed by more than a couple of percentage points.

The number of Hispanic students in Texas' four-year public colleges has more than doubled since 2000-01.

Much like the overall figures, most four-year colleges showed modest changes in their two-year persistence rates for Hispanic students from 2000 through 2012. Some of the more noteworthy colleges are the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), Stephen F. Austin State University, and the University of Texas-Pan American, which all pushed their persistence rate from the 70s to just at or above 75 percent.

UTEP especially is an example of how strong partnerships, a commitment to data, and a student-focused culture can yield results. Driven by Diana Natalicio, the school's long-tenured president, UTEP has transformed itself into an institution that truly serves the largely Hispanic and geographically isolated community. In doing so, it provides a blueprint for other colleges to follow.

El Paso is a heavily Hispanic community on the western edge of Texas's border with Mexico. But 20 years ago most UTEP students were white and the college was drawing almost no students from the poorer and more Hispanic high schools in the surrounding area.[73] Aside from basic questions of equity, UTEP's failure to serve its region was specifically a problem because El Paso's isolation meant it was hard for students to go elsewhere for postsecondary education.

So Natalicio, and local leaders came together to found the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence. Much like the efforts in Santa Ana, the collaborative brought together different parts of the education system and the community to pursue coherent strategies for improving education. According to Donna Ekal, the associate provost for undergraduate studies at UTEP, the collaborative "started to share data and take a hard honest look at what was happening educationally in our community, and over time made serious efforts to make sure that the higher education pipeline in El Paso was really available to all the students of El Paso."[74]

Today, over 80 percent of students are Hispanic and 82 percent come from the surrounding region.[75] That adjustment further highlighted the extent to which UTEP and El Paso needed to work together because they are in an effectively closed community. While the vast majority of UTEP students come from nearby high schools, the bulk of teachers in the El Paso system are graduates from UTEP.[76] Blaming high schools for the job they do preparing students is also an indictment of the university since it provides most of the educational workforce.[77]

So the university started taking a closer look at what was actually holding back student achievement. "We've focused a lot over the past 25 years on where we are creating barriers for students—whether they are financial or class scheduling or degree plan confusion," Natalicio said. "Whatever they might be, let's identify them and let's get rid of them."[78] UTEP ultimately started thinking about these barriers in terms of different roadblocks to access that range from financial and academic concerns to less-tangible things like students' expectations.

This way of thinking encouraged the creation of different programs across a student's life cycle of interactions with UTEP. For those still in high school, it meant leveraging the collaborative to build stronger connections between

the high schools, El Paso Community College, and UTEP to create a college-going culture. Increased use of early college high schools and the opportunity to earn postsecondary credit helped show those students they could expect to succeed at the next level.[79]

UTEP also made changes at the university level. It expanded on-campus work opportunities to about 2,500 positions so that students could get research experience and not be drawn off-campus for jobs.[80] It established summer bridge programs and freshmen seminars to emphasize softer skills like the need to go to class and register for the next semester in a timely manner. UTEP also improved its academic advising system to be more transparent about degree plans and requirements so students would not find themselves with gaps in their credit requirements.

UTEP is also working closely with El Paso Community College to help award associate degrees to students through a reverse transfer program. Under this initiative, students who first earn at least 15 credits at the community college and transfer to UTEP can automatically receive an associate degree once they complete all the requirements for that credential. According to Ekal, granting the associate degree can boost students' confidence that they can succeed in postsecondary education and those who go through this process appear to have higher bachelor's degree completion rates. Nearly 5,000 students have earned associate degrees through this program over the last eight years.[81]

A harder-to-quantify factor that surely plays some role in UTEP's success is the leadership of President Natalicio. She has been running the institution since 1988, including during the collaborative's creation. Having a strong leader in place for so long creates time for trust to develop between different educational partners and makes it easier to smooth transitions between UTEP and high schools and community colleges.

Much of UTEP's story should be broadly applicable to other Texas colleges and universities facing increases in their Hispanic student populations. A willingness to reshape policies to meet students' needs, a commitment to data, and the formulation of strong community partnerships are all things that any college could pursue. But they also will not just happen automatically. The next section lays out some steps that institutions and states should take to do a better job serving Hispanic students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for States and Systems

Attention to data is a common theme among the colleges interviewed for this project. While much of the information used by these institutions was likely self-generated, states and systems can do more to get useful data in the hands of colleges. For example, resources like the Data Mart for community colleges in California make it possible to quickly generate multiyear reports on student progress disaggregated by a wide variety of factors. These data can help colleges start conversations about their results and serve as a jumping-off point to deeper dives within their own administrative data.

Creating useful data for institutions does not have to be as complicated as what they themselves might have—such as the ability to see actual grades in specific classes. But it must go beyond the way many states currently look at results. For example, Texas and the California State University system both look only at first-time full-time students for their outcome data by race. That cohort is too narrow to be useful for institutions that have large populations of transfer and part-time students.

A willingness to reshape policies to meet students' needs, a commitment to data, and the formulation of strong community partnerships are all things that any college could pursue.

Too many other states do not pay sufficient attention to disaggregating outcomes by race. While most look at graduation rates by race, many others do not report any short-term outcome data like retention rates with a similar breakdown. States such as Illinois and New York, which have large and growing Hispanic populations and do not look at these types of data, may be missing obvious signs of problems that need to be addressed.

To that end, states and systems must start doing a better job tracking outcomes for students beyond the traditional first-time full-time cohort. And such work must include more than just graduation rates. States and systems need to be tracking intermediate indicators as well, including measures of multiyear persistence and credit accumulation. Once collected, the data also must not just sit on a website. Rather, states and systems need to establish a formal process for sharing the data with colleges and high schools.

States also need to explicitly include Hispanic students in their strategic plans for higher education. Texas, for example, has the Closing the Gaps initiative, which started in 2000 and set goals for where the state's higher education system should be in 2015. The initiative lays out statewide and institutional goals for Hispanic student participation and completion.[82] It tracks progress on these measures each year both overall and by college and uses these findings to suggest additional policies needed to help Hispanic students. Though the state has unfortunately failed to meet those targets, their existence provides a form of accountability and a set of goals to strive toward. California also has a well-known master plan for higher education, which was established in 1960. Though that plan does not address Hispanic students in particular, it does lay out a set of expectations for how different colleges are supposed to work together.[83] And serving Hispanic students has been more specifically called out in newer plans, such as the System Strategic Plan for California Community Colleges. That document highlights the low transfer and success rates of Hispanic students as an issue that needs to be addressed.[84]

Finally, states should consider what role they can play in facilitating the growth of opportunities for students to earn college credit while still in high school. Encouraging colleges to work with local schools to establish the partnerships necessary to set up dual-credit or early-college high schools can help with access, completion, and affordability efforts.

Recommendations for Colleges and Universities

The different schools highlighted in this paper show that improving college retention and completion is about more than just the efforts that occur on the campus itself. They entail a set of interventions throughout a student's lifecycle that address different barriers that can derail the chance of graduating. And they cannot be accomplished alone, but require partnerships with other educational providers and the broader community.

The work has to start no later than high school. Attempts to catch remedial needs while students are still in high school, such as seen in California, can increase preparation rates and make the ultimate transition easier. And increasing the use of dual-credit and early-college high school opportunities, such as seen at UTEP and elsewhere, can give students a sense of what it takes to succeed in college while also cutting down on the number of credits they have to pay for later.

As the example of Santa Ana shows, making things like early remedial identification and dual credit actually work goes beyond just the policies implemented. They require strong relationships and trust between the different educational organizations. These cannot be forged overnight; they require a lot of hard work over multiple years as well as stable leadership.

Colleges and communities that have not formed such partnerships have a lot of ground to make up. Here, the Common Core may provide an opportunity. Because these new standards for K-12 students emphasize college and career readiness, they are forcing conversations between high schools and colleges about what skills and knowledge students need in a more purposeful way than before. When done well, these discussions about making the standards work should result in a greater alignment of practices and academic requirements, similar to what came out of community collaboration in Santa Ana, El Paso, and elsewhere.

There is also plenty that colleges should do with the students they have once they get on campus. This must start with a commitment to data collection, analysis, and program evaluation. Many of the colleges interviewed can point to an "aha" moment several years ago when they finally started looking at performance data and discovered trends they had overlooked or not properly understood. Regularly measuring and tracking results is the best place to start.

There are far more options in terms of the programs or policies to pursue. No two colleges emphasized all the same things. But the root approach was similar: adjusting policies to meet students where they are and working with them to succeed. For example, Cerritos made proactive efforts to reach out to families and explain what it means to have a student in college, while UTEP added more on-campus jobs to reflect the fact that so many of its students have to work. Some schools added extra tutoring and advising to simplify the complex process of charting a path to a degree. There is no clear consensus set of options that all schools must pursue. Nor is it likely that any one intervention will be a cure-all solution. But the colleges that have done a better job in this space have shown a willingness to test out new things with varying degrees of evaluation. They've also dropped programs that were not working.

Many colleges can point to an "aha" moment when they finally started looking at performance data and discovered trends they had overlooked or not properly understood.

What is less clear from interviews with colleges is how important interventions specifically targeted at Hispanic students are. Only a few institutions talked about specific work aimed at Hispanic students, and these efforts often involved either providing additional materials in Spanish to help parents or ensuring the creation of a welcoming culture by helping students develop the study, time management, and other skills that are needed to succeed in college. A few other colleges, meanwhile, are so predominantly comprised of Hispanic students that making special distinctions for them would not make any sense. In most cases, efforts to serve Hispanic students were wrapped up in broader programs to help low-income and first-generation students or minority men.

That most colleges approach the challenge of Hispanic student outcomes as a matter of addressing broader race and class issues further accentuates the importance of

constantly measuring detailed breakdowns of outcomes. Even if colleges do not create specific interventions for Hispanic students, they should ensure that interventions aimed at improving outcomes are still effective for this population. Such efforts should also entail proactive attempts to make sure Hispanic students feel included, are participating, and that the intervention works for them.

Federal Recommendations

As noted previously, federal data are ill-equipped to properly measure the success rates of Hispanic students. And there is no evidence that this is going to change soon. The U.S. Department of Education is in the process of requiring colleges to report new outcomes measures that will provide data on students who transferred into a college or attend part time. But none of these figures will be disaggregated by race or ethnicity. Fixing this to include information on Hispanic students would require colleges to start reporting data on many more cohorts with a corresponding increase in burden.

The simplest way to solve the federal data problem is to overturn the ban that prohibits creating a federal student unit record system. Having individual-level data would make it possible to assess outcomes by race and ethnicity without requiring additional reporting by the college. A student-level database has the added advantage of being able to provide annual updates on students, so it can generate both retention and completion rates by race.

The simplest way to solve the federal data problem is to overturn the ban that prohibits creating a federal student unit record system.

From a funding standpoint, the U.S. Department of Education should consider whether the $200 million it offers each year to support capacity-building at Hispanic-Serving Institutions is sufficiently large enough to support the number of colleges that qualify for its funds.[85] Similarly, it should consider limiting how these funds can be used, to focus most directly on student success and learning. The Higher Education Act currently allows colleges to use these resources for up to 15 different purposes and it gives the Education Secretary the option to approve others.[86] While some of the allowable uses are for things like student support, others can go to less-related activities, like building an endowment or strengthening the development office.

CONCLUSION

In many ways, the institutions discussed in this paper are a glimpse of the future. Their stories of success and challenges will become increasingly relevant for other colleges over the coming years. Now is the time to recognize where the trends are headed and to take steps to adapt campuses, classes, and processes to better serve Hispanic students. Doing so will be a crucial step for meeting our national attainment goals.

NOTES

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