

GROWING WHAT WORKS

LESSONS LEARNED REPLICATING PROMISING
PRACTICES FOR LATINO STUDENT SUCCESS



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Excelencia in Education accelerates higher education success for Latino students by providing data-driven analysis of the educational status of Latinos, and by promoting education policies and institutional practices that support their academic achievement. A not-for-profit organization, *Excelencia* is building a network of results-oriented educators and policymakers to address the U.S. economy's need for a highly educated workforce and for civic leadership. For more information, please visit www.EdExcelencia.org.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
Background	8
Growing What Works Initiative	9
The Impact of SEMILLAS	10
Engaging and enrolling students	10
Integrating services to improve retention	13
Transferring from two-year to four-year institutions	15
Academic support	17
Lessons Learned	19
Sustainability	19
Leveraging Support	20
Scaling Up	21
Some Challenges	22
Summary	23

FOREWORD

How do we accelerate Latino student success in higher education? We have to find programs and strategies that improve the success of Latino students, and then replicate or scale up those programs and strategies to serve more students.

Those are the basic principles behind *Excelencia* in Education's Growing What Works (GWW) initiative. The Growing What Works initiative is *Excelencia* in Education's concerted effort to expand the reach of programs increasing Latino student success, as identified through the Examples of *Excelencia*, and demonstrating how these programs can be replicated through small SEMILLAS (Seeding Educational Models that Impact and Leverage Latino Academic Success) grants.

The results described in this brief were made possible through a working partnership with foundations and institutions of higher education who committed to achieve and propagate demonstrable results in accelerating Latino student success in higher education.

More specifically, the Growing What Works initiative began in 2009 with support from the Walmart Foundation and Senior Director Michelle Gilliard to sponsor the first group of SEMILLAS grants. The Kresge Foundation and Program Officer Caroline Altman Smith expanded support in 2010 for an additional group of institutions, the creation of an online

searchable database of program information, and an assessment of the initiative. Without their investments, *Excelencia* in Education's vision for strategic and intentional commitment to promote replicating proven programs in Latino student achievement in higher education would have remained an untested strategy. Instead, these investments and the effective stewardship of the participating colleges and universities ultimately served 8,000 students in communities across the country.

This brief includes lessons learned from implementing the Growing What Works initiative and SEMILLAS grants. Critical in this time of great change for higher education and for Latino students is the following lesson. Targeted, well managed financial and human resources focused on Latino student success, not only produce effective results for students, the participating institutions and supporting foundations, but demonstrate the strength and viability of these strategies to accelerate larger social impact and serve as catalysts for institutional change to increase Latino student success.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Institutional practices across the country are improving Latino student success in higher education. However, many of these practices only serve a small number of students. Since 2005, *Excelencia* in Education has been identifying and presenting promising practices to the field, monitoring reactions and watching for early adopters and investors. We have noted that while the number of Latino students seeking to enroll in colleges and universities has increased, the level of institutional change to support their academic success has not kept pace. Thus replicating effective practices and increasing the reach of evidence-based practices for student success continues to be a critical challenge for today's colleges and universities to meet.

The Growing What Works initiative was launched by *Excelencia* in Education in 2009 to support the replication of evidence-based practices culled from the Examples of *Excelencia* portfolio at campuses committed to Latino student success. With initial funding from the Walmart Foundation and continued with funding from the Kresge Foundation, *Excelencia* sponsored two cohorts

of SEMILLAS (Seeding Educational Models that Impact and Leverage Latino Academic Success) grants. From 2009-11, *Excelencia* in Education awarded \$1.375 million through 25 SEMILLAS grants (averaging between \$50,000 and 75,000) to improve Latino student success within selected colleges and universities.



The SEMILLAS grants provided support for institutional practices intentionally focused on Latino students. These practices were not implemented to the exclusion of other students, but provided an opportunity for institutions to overtly include Latino students in their efforts.

SEMILLAS IMPACT

With one year of support, the activities and strategies deployed by the grantees resulted in the following immediate impacts:

- More than 225 grant applications were submitted for 25 grants awarded.
- More than 6,400 Latino and other students in 11 states were served to improve college preparation, access, retention, and graduation.
- More than 600 high school students were served to improve college preparation.
- Over 900 parents and families participated in activities that helped them understand the need and requirements for college.
- Overall, 25 college campus teams—many including staff from different administrative areas as well as advisory boards—implemented programs.
- One year after funding was completed, 23 of the program strategies originally funded by SEMILLAS grants were leveraged to grow their financial and human resources to maintain and expand their program efforts.

Beyond the initial impact of the grants, defining the broader success of the initiative was more challenging. Grantees provided some evidence of effectiveness by either summarizing the participation, enrollment, retention, grades, or transfer of those served or comparing their impact from program services from previous years for those served. However, effective educational investments generally take longer to show impact. Therefore, *Excelencia in Education* also explored the sustainability and leveraging efforts by grantees to reflect their continued commitment to Latino student success. A review of the outcomes from SEMILLAS grants provided the following insights in addressing increased Latino student success.

Funding: A modest but well implemented financial investment does impact Latino student success. While the funding through SEMILLAS was modest, providing external funds to overtly include Latino students in programs offered rich opportunities for institutional leaders prepared to serve those students well.

Leveraging: Several institutions leveraged their SEMILLAS grants by securing additional funding to sustain their programs serving Latino students. Other grantees were able to leverage SEMILLAS grant funding within their institution to receive additional support that supplanted SEMILLAS funding.

Sustainability: Overt commitment from the institution's president and/or provost was a key component of sustainability and continuation of program activities beyond the SEMILLAS grant. Further, for several grantees, receiving SEMILLAS grants helped garner non-monetary or in-kind support within their institution to continue their efforts.

Intentionality: Identifying practices with evidence in increasing Latino student success for replication served as a catalyst for institutional change. Reexamining institutional procedures to serve Latino students better proved to be a critical step to increase the success of all students.

Challenges: Some of the grant efforts required significant staff time as well as dedicated funding. Those extra requirements might hinder institutionalization, despite the demonstrated effectiveness of the practices.

While the SEMILLAS grants were of limited time and investment, the preliminary results of the effort demonstrate the importance of creating opportunities for institutions to intentionally serve Latino students and the potential for institutions, community-based organizations, and policymakers to invest in expanding the reach of evidence-based practices to reach the educational attainment needs of the nation by accelerating Latino student success.

INTRODUCTION

Achieving the nation’s educational attainment goals is impossible without significant improvements in the postsecondary success of Latino students. Three facts from the U.S. Census inform the focused attention on Latinos:

1. Latinos are the youngest and fastest-growing population group in the United States. In 2010, Latinos represented 22 percent of the K-12 population in the country.
2. Latinos are now the second largest racial/ethnic group enrolled in higher education.
3. Among adults (25 and over), Latinos are less likely than other racial and ethnic groups to have earned an associate degree or higher. In 2011, only 21 percent of Latino adults 25 and over had earned an associate degree or higher, compared to 40 percent of all adults.

The population growth combined with the current college achievement gap between Latinos and other adults makes clear the need

to accelerate Latino student success. In turn, to accelerate Latino success in higher education requires identifying effective institutional programs for our country’s fast-growing Latino student population. However, identifying what programs work to increase Latino educational achievement is not sufficient; expanding the reach of what works is needed to meet the goal of closing educational achievement gaps for Latinos to meet our national educational attainment goals.

This brief provides some background on the creation of the Growing What Works initiative to expand the reach of evidence-based practices focused on Latino student success, the initial impact of the grants, lessons learned, and challenges.



BACKGROUND

Excelencia in Education analyzes current higher educational policies and practices, identifies what is working for students, and guides implementation of improvement strategies in outreach, access, retention, transfer, and degree attainment. Critical to this work are Examples of *Excelencia* and the SEMILLAS grants, the two main components of the Growing What Works initiative.

Begun in 2005, Examples of *Excelencia* is the only national data-driven initiative to recognize programs and departments with evidence of effectiveness in improving Latino student success at the associate, baccalaureate, and graduate levels. The Examples of *Excelencia* initiative redirects the field from problems to solutions and links research, policy, and practice with colleges and universities. Every year, Examples of *Excelencia* engages an expanding network of results-oriented educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the process of identifying examples of programs producing positive results for Latino students in higher education.

We learned the following from experience with Examples of *Excelencia* and provided participating institutions with SEMILLAS grants with guidance, technical assistance, and support in increasing Latino student success:

- Collaborations and partnerships within institutions (with faculty and staff) and with the local community are necessary to ensure positive outcomes.
- Using data to make effective decisions increases institutional support and the alignment of effort with success.
- Explicitly targeting Latino students for services increases the institutions' visibility in the Latino community and demonstrates their commitment to serve Latino students.
- Fostering relationships and awareness of student efforts within and outside the institution has positive impacts that manifest beyond the direct provision of services.

While there are numerous efforts across the country to improve college achievement, most serve a small number of students; too few have evidence of effectiveness; and even fewer



disaggregate data to monitor who is well served by the programs.

To accelerate Latino student success, it is essential to replicate and bring to scale effective campus-based practices. *Excelencia* in Education created the Growing What Works initiative in 2009 to replicate and scale up evidence-based practices identified in Examples of *Excelencia* through SEMILLAS grants. *Excelencia* in Education designed the SEMILLAS grants to replicate the use of carefully chosen institutional practices with evidence of effectiveness in increasing Latino educational attainment at the associate and baccalaureate levels. In doing so, *Excelencia* is building a catalog of powerful, replicable, and scalable institutional practices and strategies that increase Latino student success, and promoting these practices at selected colleges and universities.

GROWING WHAT WORKS INITIATIVE

The acronym SEMILLAS “Seeding Educational Models that Impact and Leverage Latino Academic Success” is the Spanish word for seeds, which reflects the Growing What Works (GWW) vision and objective of growing evidence-based practices at the grassroots level. Growing What Works evolved from the recognition that positive change can come from within an institution, and student success efforts need to be documented, supported, and increased for maximum effectiveness.

As a part of the GWW initiative, *Excelencia* carried out a rigorous nationwide competitive grant process to award 25 grants between \$50,000 and \$75,000 for 18 months to replicate and refine selected evidence-based practices in 2009 and 2010. *Excelencia* received support initially from the Walmart Foundation for the first cohort and subsequently from the Kresge Foundation to support the second cohort of grant projects. Overall, more than 225 grant applications were received; reflecting the wide interest to grow practices that improve Latino student success in higher education throughout the nation.

Projects were funded in 11 states. The largest number of projects were located in California (5), followed by Texas (4) and New York (4), Florida (3), Connecticut (2) and Arizona (2). There were also projects in Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, New Jersey, and North Carolina. The majority of projects (22) were implemented by public institutions of higher education at the baccalaureate level (18). Further, of the 25 grantees, nine had a Latino undergraduate full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of 25 percent or more, thus meeting

the basic definition of a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). The other grantees were emerging HSIs or had growing Latino enrollments and expressed commitment to increasing Latino student success on their campuses.

All grantees demonstrated knowledge of demographic trends in their institutions, and current institutional data on student participation, persistence, and outcomes as well as commitment to accelerating Latino student success and the capacity to sustain effective programming beyond the grant.

The focus of the grants were on college access, retention, and transfer to increase Latino student success. To enable the success of grantees, the grant implementation process offered clear guidance about expectations and technical support, established professional networking opportunities with other institutions, and linked *Excelencia*'s resources to support grantee efforts. Near the end of the grant, a conference call was held with presidents, senior administrators, and project directors to review grant results and discuss sustainability.



THE IMPACT OF SEMILLAS

With one year of implementation, the activities and strategies deployed by the grantees resulted in the following immediate impacts:

- More than **6,400** Latino and other students in 11 states were served to improve college preparation, access, retention, and graduation.
- More than **600** high school students were served to improve college preparation.
- Over **900** parents and families participated in activities that helped them understand the need and requirements for college.
- Overall, **25** college campus teams—many including staff from different administrative areas as well as advisory boards—implemented programs.
- One year after funding was completed, **23** of the program strategies originally funded by SEMILLAS grants were leveraged to grow their financial and human resources to maintain and expand their program efforts.

Proven working models, programs and strategies that boost Latino enrollment, performance and graduation in higher education from Examples of *Excelencia* were narrowed to four key areas that provided the basis for replication at the associate

and baccalaureate levels for two successive cohorts of SEMILLAS grantees.

1. **Engaging and enrolling** first-generation college-goers, low-income and Latino students (such as college prep, outreach, and access practices).
2. **Integrating services** to improve retention for first-generation college-goers and Latino students (such as advising, supplemental education, student services or academic support).
3. **Transfer** from two-year to four-year institutions with support services.
4. **Academic support programs** that engage students in the learning process for successful completion.

The following summarizes the efforts by grantees in each of the four areas noted above and then provides a summary of each of the grantee projects and their outcomes. More detailed information on the outcomes are available in *Excelencia's* Growing What Works database (www.edexcelencia.org/examples).

ENGAGING AND ENROLLING STUDENTS

Eight of the grantees improved the enrollment of first-generation, low-income, and Latino students. Their practices included outreach through pre-collegiate partnerships with school districts and community organizations to prepare students for college, and equipped mother-daughter teams with the skills, knowledge and resources to pursue college admission. Several institutions offered dual enrollment to students so they could earn college credits while still in high school. Through an Algebra transition program, another grantee improved readiness skills in mathematics, and increased eligibility and enrollment of Latino students in credit-bearing college courses. The following are brief summaries of the eight grantees.

The First Year for the First Generation

Project: Palm Beach State College, Lake Worth, Florida. The First Year for the First Generation Project established college practices to sustain the enrollment of first generation Latino students.

Goals: 1) Increase the number of Latino students participating in dual enrollment; 2) Award 24% of first-generation college scholarships to entering Hispanic/Latino students; 3) 90% of Hispanic/Latino students will access components

of the First Experience Program; 4) Increase the percentage of Latino students who access specific support from the college.

Outcomes: The project met or surpassed the goals detailed above, except for awarding 19% of first-generation scholarships instead of 24%. In addition, the initiative promoted better communication within the college. Further, the project activities have become integrated into the culture of the institution.

College-Now, Algebra Transition Program:

City University of New York – Lehman College, Bronx, New York. The College Now Program formed partnerships with four Bronx high schools to implement an algebra transition project.

Goal: To improve college readiness skills in mathematics and to increase eligibility and enrollment of Latino students in the college credit-bearing college courses.

Outcomes: The project surpassed the objectives: 85% of the students in the cohort

completed the algebra transition course; all families received bilingual college materials and introductory letter explaining the purpose of the intervention; five teachers taught six algebra classes; 85% of the students in the cohort passed the algebra course with 75 or better. In addition, the collaboration between high school math teachers and college faculty has been useful in identifying specific skills needed to bridge the transition gap.

LEAP2 Success/Exito: State University of New York-Fredonia, Fredonia, New York. LEAP2Success/Exito is a three-stage program to demystify the pathway to a college education for Latino students and their families. The program strengthened outreach through a model pre-collegiate outreach partnership with an area school district, and through integration, enhancement and streamlining of existing pre-collegiate programs, admissions outreach, and matriculated students support programs.

Goals: 1) To develop college going with participants; 2) To focus on college going, and to focus

on the academic success and adjustment of first-year matriculated college students.

Outcomes: The university invested in a number of strategies to reach out to Latino students and collaborated with a wide range of community agencies and schools. Because of these partnerships, LEAP2Success was able to reach middle and high school students, as well as parents and other members of the larger community. The university received a Higher Education State grant to support a half time position of Latino Outreach Coordinator after grant completion.

Mother-Daughter Program: Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois. The Mother-Daughter Program is a replication of a highly effective model at The University of Texas at El Paso to engage Latina mothers and daughters in college preparation and college success.

Goals: 1) Equip mother-daughter teams with the skills, knowledge and resources to prepare for and pursue attainment of college; 2) Increase the number of Latino families in the Galesburg/Monmouth/Roseville Illinois area whose daughters ultimately earn a baccalaureate degree; 3)

Increase the college completion rate of Latino women enrolled at Knox College.

Outcomes: Participants demonstrated a more realistic and informed sense of both their level of preparation and of the kind of information and skills they would need to be better prepared for college. The program had a 100% retention rate. In addition to training mother-daughter teams, a strong collaboration with the local school district was established. The college also connected this initiative to a well-established program—the Knox College 4 Kids program.

College Academy for Parents (CAP) Expansion

Model: The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. College Academy for Parents (CAP) is a college outreach program engaging parent advocates to lead bilingual workshops at area schools.

Goals: 1) Increase parents' understanding of the benefits of college and their role in influencing their children's academic success; 2) Increase parents' understanding of high school course and grade requirements and the college application and scholarship

process; 3) Facilitate parents' leadership in promoting college knowledge to other parents; 4) Increase student preparation and enrollment in college.

Outcomes: The grant supported expansion of the program to include 10th graders. CAP provided workshops at eight sites in a bilingual format within four school districts and eight high schools. High school staff was engaged in the delivery of the workshops. The program also developed videos to explain the path to college.

Upward Bound Parent-to-Parent Program:

University of Texas Brownsville, Brownsville, Texas. The Upward Bound Parent-to-Parent Program strengthens the parental role that will create a college success culture by giving parents the tools to support their children beyond the college admission process.

Goals: 1) Increase high school parents' understanding of the benefits of college and their role in influencing their children's academic success. 2) Increase parents' understanding of college requirements and the college application process. 3) Increase parents' recognition of the importance of community involvement and volunteerism. 4)

Facilitate parents' leadership in promoting college knowledge to other families. 5) Increase student preparation and enrollment in college.

Outcomes: A total of 42 parent volunteers were recruited and trained, reaching 652 other parents who attended workshops around core lessons. These lessons included: understanding adolescent development and communication with your child, making the grade for high school graduation, and preparing for college. In addition to the volunteers and participants, the project worked in collaboration with a community based organization, Abriendo Puertas, the university and a school district. This collaboration leveraged resources.

Pre-Medical and Health Scholars Program:

University of California, San Francisco – Fresno, California. The Pre-Medical and Health Scholars Program includes a summer orientation for incoming freshmen, parental outreach, and on-going support services including seminars, advising, and tutoring for the purpose of diversifying the health care workforce.

Goal: Increase retention and academic success of Latino, low income, 1st generation college going pre-health students enrolled at Fresno State.

Outcomes: Initially, 26 students received tutorial services. Of these students, 60% received a B grade or higher. Tutorial sessions were highly rated in semester evaluations. Students noted they enjoyed the convenience of having their own highly knowledgeable tutors in their subject areas. In Spring 2010, there were 51 students enrolled in the program. The student numbers have remained steady and program retention is high. Currently, there are four students in the health professional school application process and this number is expected to grow.

Graduation Achievement Project (GAP):

Colorado State University – Pueblo, Pueblo, Colorado. Students with 90 credits or more who have left the university are contacted and invited to re-enter college and complete a degree. Necessary services are provided to facilitate this process.

Goals: Integrate all CSU-Pueblo services necessary for students with 90 credits or more to re-enter college and successfully complete a

bachelor degree, including admissions, financial aid, student records, advising, career services and academic departments.

Outcomes: A total of 88 students were re-enrolled and within the one-year grant period, 40 students received an undergraduate degree. As a result of this project, the campus has a better understanding of system issues that need to be addressed to improve graduation rates.

INTEGRATING SERVICES TO IMPROVE RETENTION

Eight grantees integrated support and academic services to improve retention for first-generation college goers and Latino students. For example, one developed a seamless process for adult students to transfer from non-credit to credit-bearing courses; another developed a comprehensive program to improve math success in gatekeeper courses for Latino students; another integrated interventions from four different support areas to promote academic success of first-time Latino students in the engineering field through learning communities; and another grantee developed a leadership academy to engage Latino students in leadership activities throughout the college experience to promote academic success, retention, and graduation. The following are overview summaries of the projects funded to integrate services to improve retention.

Doorway to Success: Latino Male Retention Initiative – Monroe Community College, Rochester, New York. Doorway to Success is a Latino male-focused college retention program including academic advising, dual-enrollment courses, peer mentoring program, and Latino male focus groups.

Goals: 1) Improve Latino male study habits and engagement activities; 2) Increase retention of Latino male participants by 5%; 3) Achieve 80% participation in co-curricular activities and program activities among students and families; 4) Develop internal and external collaborative partnerships for counseling, learning assistance and referral services.

Outcomes: The program served 100 new and returning adult Latino male students. This represents a 50% increase from the prior year. Retention rates of students participating in the program were 5% higher than for those not participating. 90% of all participants attended co-curricular and program activities. The employment of student leaders to act as mentors and ambassadors for the program was an important outcome that resulted in peer-to-peer dialogue that supplemented advising and counseling services provided by staff.

Connecting Resources to Enhance College Excellence and Retention Program (CRECER): CUNY – La Guardia Community College, Long Island City, New York. CRECER enhances the counseling, advisement, and support that Latino and other low-income students receive as they transition from non-credit to credit studies.

Goals: 1) Increase staff capacity to support Latino and other low-income students through cross training of five counselors; 2) Increase the number of Adult and Continuing Education students who enroll in credit classes by 6%; 3) Increase the number of Adult and Continuing Education students who persist through their first year of college by 5%.

Outcomes: Around 120 students were served through CRECER. Of these, there was a 100% conversion rate—all 120 students transitioned from Adult and Continuing Education and enrolled in credit classes. Of the 120 students, 76% (N=91) persisted through the fall 2009 term. In addition, 78% (N=94) were retained (i.e., enrolled) for spring 2010, an increase of 9%, or 4% greater than the projected target. The project served as a catalyst for a cultural shift that resulted in partnerships between the non-credit and credit divisions at the institution. These partnerships helped students by streamlining processes and providing a clearer pathway in terms of career options.

PASS-Math: Miami Dade Wolfson Campus, Miami, Florida. PASS-Math is a comprehensive program with the goal of improving math success in gatekeeper courses for Latino students.

Goals: 1) Increase passing rates of students enrolled in Intermediate Algebra by 5%; 2) Increase continuous enrollment of math courses to 90%; 3) Reduce levels of math anxiety and improve attitudes toward math by 50%.

Outcomes: The program met and exceeded the first two goals. Students participating in MATH-Pass succeeded in the math course at a higher rate than regular students and continued enrolled in the college. Math anxiety was only reduced in participating students by 25%. One of the most significant strengths of the project was the partnering among different areas, including the Math Department, Social Sciences faculty, Math Lab, Academic Advising, and others.

Engineering and Computer Science Scholars

Program: California State University Fullerton, Fullerton, CA. The Engineering and Computer Science Scholars Program is a learning communities-based model that integrates interventions for four different support areas with the purpose of promoting academic success of first-time Latino students in the engineering field.

Goals: 1) Increase retention and academic success of first-year Latino students in the College

of Engineering and Computer Science; 2) Identification of specific interventions, including tutoring, study groups, and service learning opportunities to acclimate first-year Latino students to college life.

Outcomes: Goals were met. For example, in the first cohort, 24 students participated during the spring semester and 80% were retained. Another 28 students were scheduled to participate in Fall 2010.

Leadership and Involvement for Diversity, Engagement and Retention (LIDER)

Program: Texas A&M International University, Laredo, Texas. LIDER is a leadership academy to engage Latino students in leadership activities throughout the college experience to promote academic success, retention, and graduation.

Goal: Increase retention rate, engagement, and leadership of first-year enrollment of first generation college-going Latino students.

Outcomes: The funding gave the University the opportunity to meet its goals and connect different efforts. The University expanded the grant to include a leadership program for upper level

students. A total of 24 students participated in the freshman LIDER and 27 in the upper classmen Leadership TAMIU. Of LIDER program participants, 96% successfully completed the freshman year and were retained at a 20% higher rate than students who did not participate. Leadership program students averaged a 3.57 GPA. The program helped the University connect with the Harvard Kennedy Latino Leadership Institute and send six students to participate in that experience. Students were invited to apply for the leadership experience, making them feel special. The experience was so successful the President expressed his desire to expand the leadership program into a certificate program and eventually make it an academic minor.

Student Contact Request (SCORE) System

Project: Palm Beach State College, Lake Worth, Florida. SCORE upgraded the College Early Alert system to create a robust academic intervention for students, to identify which populations of students were experiencing difficulty in specific courses, and identify which demographic groups were impacted by Early Alert interventions.

Goals: Increase Latino student college completion through the SCORE system project and provide an academic safety net for students at risk of

failing out due to a lack of utilization of college-wide supportive assistance services.

Outcomes: Through collaboration with different programs, SCORE is now utilized as a success tool rather than a punitive referral process. This culture change resulted from a communication campaign with parents and students and different sectors of the college. The SCORE system will be working with the College student records database to produce meaningful reports about student success.

Supporting Achievement for Latino Students ¡Ahora! (SALSA): Texas A&M University-Commerce, Commerce, Texas. SALSA implemented a retention model to engage, prepare and mobilize a minimum of 200 first-generation Latino students through additional support of student leaders/interns, events to increase awareness of available services, and supplemental instruction in key gateway courses.

Goals: The goal of this initiative was to develop a model for expanding proven institutional practices and strategies in the areas of advising, supplemental education, student services and academic support, so that student persistence

and graduation rates improved among first-generation Latino college-goers.

Outcomes: There was a significant increase in the number of visits, appointments and communications to the Office of Hispanic Outreach, and the number of students who registered to receive communications. The Office served 818 students in fall 2010; 1,577 in spring 2011; and 1,307 in summer 2011. Students who participated in tutorials and supplemental instruction had a higher percentage pass rate than those that did not participate. All these efforts resulted in gains made by Hispanic males, whose retention rate was reported at 73%, higher than for both White and African American males.

TRANSFERRING FROM TWO-YEAR TO FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

Four of the grantees developed practices to ensure successful transfer from a two- to a four-year institution. Among the four, one focused on targeted online services to increase transfer rates and promote retention among transfer students; and another developed peer mentoring programs to guide students through the transfer process and help them acclimate to the new institution.

Dual Enrollment Program: Eastern Connecticut State University, Willimantic, Connecticut. With assistance from educators in Hartford Public High School, Eastern and its community college partner, Quinebaug Valley Community College, developed the Dual Enrollment initiative to recruit, retain, and graduate underrepresented students from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially Latinos, in Hartford's inner city.

Goals: 1) Increase the number of Latino high school students enrolled and retained in dual enrollment program in collaboration with local community college; 2) Increase the academic success of dual enrollment students; 3) Eliminate housing barriers for ten students.

Outcomes: Of the ten students selected to enroll in the Dual Enrollment Initiative in fall 2009, nine (90%) returned to Eastern as second year students. This retention rate is higher than the 78 percent for other incoming full-time freshmen. Moreover, six students successfully matriculated full-time to Eastern in Spring 2010 after just one semester of developmental work, while the other three spent one full year enrolled at the community college. The key to helping these students succeed is "to take them out of the environment," thus having them live in university housing is an essential component of the dual enrollment program. Eastern encouraged students to stay during the summer and take courses to increase amount of credits earned and continue the program.

Transfer Day, Community College Alliance, and Adelante Scholars Programs: Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California. These 3 transfer initiatives, in collaboration with local community colleges, provide campus visits to prospective transfer students, informational workshops for community college transfer advisors, and targeted support services for transfer students.

Goals: 1) Increase awareness and interest in Loyola Marymount College by Latino students at feeder community colleges; 2) Strengthen alliances between LMU and feeder community colleges; 3) Improve academic and social integration as well as graduation rates of the Fall 2009 Cohort entering transfer students.

Outcomes: The Transfer Preview Day provided free transportation, which increased the number

of prospective students visiting campus to 700. Students were offered the opportunity to participate in an array of educational activities and the chance to interact with currently enrolled students who had previously transferred. Equally important was the outreach effort to transfer advisors, counselors, and coordinators, many of whom had never visited the campus. In addition to the above, LMU offers transfer students through the Adelante Scholars Program an orientation and a one credit course to help them transition to the University. LMU has found that although these students have two years of school prior to transferring, the academic rigor they encounter in their new academic setting is a shock for many of them. Leadership, career development and internship opportunities are also incorporated into the Adelante program.

Seamless Transfer (SET @ UNT) Program: University of North Texas, Denton, Texas. SET@UNT is a transfer program focusing on targeted online services to increase transfer rates and promote retention among transfer students.

Goals: 1) Increase virtual and social engagement among Latino transfer cohorts; 2) Increase the use of academic and financial support services and programs among the target Latino transfer cohorts; 3) Improve educational attainment of Latino transfer cohorts.

Outcomes: The program met its goals and provided tools to help Latino students' transition and be academically successful at UNT. It also provided information to their parents/family. Through SET@UNT, students were able to connect with other transfer students and understand the importance of involvement on campus. Overall, 3,829 new transfer students enrolled in the Blackboard SET@UNT site and 662 new transfer students participated in the site and around 75 parents also participated in the program.

Peer Mentoring Program (PMP): San Diego State University, San Diego, California. PMP offers peer mentoring to a cohort of transferring students as a bridge between their community college and San Diego State University.

Goals: 1) Increase the number of students involved in the Southwestern College SDSU Peer Mentoring program; 2) Include San Diego City College in the initiative; 3) Solicit other CSU campuses who want to investigate the feasibility of starting a Peer Mentoring Program with their respective local community colleges.

Outcomes: Around 125 students from Southwestern College participated in the Peer Mentoring effort. Work has already begun to better align the English courses from the respective institutions. As a result of the project, a SDSU Peer Mentoring Symposium was held and a Tool Kit was provided to CSU campuses and community colleges with presentations and samples materials used by Peer Mentors. Best practices regarding English curriculum alignment were also shared.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Six grantees implemented academic programs to engage students in the learning process for successful completion. Among these was a program targeting Latino male retention and success that included learning communities, monthly lecture series, and professional development opportunities. Another grantee

instituted a social and professional support network for students studying Business and Economics. A third grantee designed a college entry program specifically for bilingual Latino health and human services personnel interested in earning a baccalaureate degree. The following are summaries of the six academic support grantees.

The Clave Latino Male Empowerment

Program: Union County College, Cranford, New Jersey. The Clave Latino Male Empowerment Program includes learning communities, monthly lecture series, professional development opportunities; and a social and professional support network for students studying Business and Economics.

Goals: 1) Increase participation of Latino males in activities and professional development; 2) Increase retention rate of Latino males in the

Education and Business majors by at least 5%; 3) Establish social and professional network for Latino males.

Outcomes: A total of 85 students participated in the program. Retention rate increased to 92% from fall to spring. In addition, students stated that having personalized contact with the Thematic Mentor and Project Director made them feel as if they mattered to the program and the college. Planned mentoring proved to be an effective tool in the retention of Latino males.

Learning Communities: West Los Angeles College, Culver City, California. Learning Communities uses an interdisciplinary technology-based teaching approach and the development of e-portfolios to increase college performance and retention.

Goals: 1) Increase information and technology literacy for Latino students in Learning Communities through ePortfolios; 2) Provide technology and pedagogical training in ePortfolios to instructors in Learning Communities to improve student retention and produce better learning outcomes for students.

Outcomes: The project exceeded all its goals with 119 students (Target: 60 students) and 16 faculty being trained (Target: 12 instructors). The College plans to motivate more faculty to become trainers to others. This ePortfolio project also became involved with ePortfolio California (www.eportfolioca.org), a service of the California Virtual Campus under the Chancellor's Office for California Community Colleges. ePortfolio California contacted West to offer ePortfolio support, webinars, resources, and training.

Semillas de Excelencia Program: Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas. *Semillas de Excelencia* (Seeds of Excellence) is an expansion of current minority enrollment and retention programs at the College of Arts and Science and Business Administration that target Latino/a freshman for events and learning communities.

Goals: 1) Improve retention rate of first-year Hispanic students by 15%; 2) Reduce the number of Hispanic students on academic warning by 20%; 3) Improve the graduation rates of 4th-7th year students by 10% each year.

Outcomes: Overall retention rate of the *Semillas de Excelencia* program was 86%. Thirty percent of the participants earned GPAs of 3.0 or better and 74% of the participants maintained a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above. The cohort of Business Administration students was smaller, which allowed for more personal contact and relationship building between mentors and students. The result was that 93% of the Business Administration participants earned cumulative GPAs of 2.0 or above and 46% ended with cumulative GPAs of 3.0 or better.

New and Enhanced Latino Programming:

North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina. The New and Enhanced Latino Programming is a retention program that includes a freshman orientation symposium, individual assistance, peer mentors, culturally competent student success series, and outreach to middle school, high school and community college students.

Goals: 1) Enhance students' and parents' orientation to the university through the Hispanic Orientation Symposium; 2) Increase retention and graduation rates of incoming and continuing students through Peer Mentor Program and SABA-Hispanic Enrichment Program; 3) Increase students' knowledge relative to scholastic and cultural contributions of people of Latino heritage through the Latino Student Success

Series; 4) Provide an increased sense of community for Latino students; 5) Improve the academic performance of sophomore and other upperclassmen that currently have less than a 2.4 GPA through the SABA-Hispanic Academic Enrichment Program; 6) Increase outreach efforts among Latino families at the middle school, high school, and community college level through student recruitment and outreach.

Outcomes: All goals were met. A number of initiatives were started that increased the opportunity to advocate for Latino students at the university including: Hispanic/Latino Symposium; enhanced student retention efforts; hired Latino recruitment captains; Hispanic/Latino Advisory Group formed; Vecinos/Neighbor initiative.

iAdelante! Certificate in Bilingual Career

Development: Saint Joseph College, West Hartford, Connecticut. Adelante is a college entry program designed for bilingual Latino health and human services personnel interested in earning a bachelor's degree.

Goals: 1) Enroll bilingual Latino health and human services personnel; 2) Prepare students for career advancement; 3) Encourage and empower educational advancement.

Outcomes: Eleven students enrolled in the 2009-10 cohort. All students completed the courses with grades of B or better indicating their proficiency in the diversity-related course objectives. All students completed 12 college credits with B or better and 100% of the students matriculated into bachelor's degree programs. The students also developed educational and career development plans.

Engaging Latino Students in the Learning Process for Successful College Completion:

University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. This program offers low-income students exposure to research by attending faculty-led colloquia for first-year students called "What are Research and Creative Expression."

Goals: Increase the number of low-income students' exposure and interest in engaging with research and creative expression.

Outcomes: The project demonstrated positive results for Latino Arizona Assurance Scholars, such as socializing with faculty outside of class and meeting with faculty during office hours. There were also positive results for students learning from a faculty member of a similar race/ethnicity. Also strong motivation for these same students related to organizational involvement demonstrating their academic and career development focus. First-year retention rates for students in the project activities were almost 2% higher than the general student population.

LESSONS LEARNED

Having fulfilled all grant objectives to the satisfaction of the Walmart Foundation and the Kresge Foundation, *Excelencia* worked closely with the SEMILLAS grantees beyond the initial grant period to continue studying and supporting the work of the campus leaders and their commitment to Latino student success. Some of the core lessons learned from this experience were that efforts to implement or replicate evidence-based practices require intentionality, resources, appropriate support, and leadership commitment from both the participating institution and the managing organization.

As educational and community leaders continue to strive to increase student success generally, and Latino student success in particular, the lessons learned from asset-based approaches to serving students, such as the Growing What Works initiative, can inform and guide future investment, replication, and scaling of evidence-based practices at the institutional and broader policy levels. Creating incentives and support for such efforts reinforces the national goal towards a more informed citizenry and competitive workforce through evidence-based practice.

The implementation of the SEMILLAS grants resulted in the following lessons learned in leveraging support and challenges.

SUSTAINABILITY

Excelencia in Education and the two GWW/ SEMILLAS funders sought to make leveraged investments in Latino student success in higher education. Therefore, SEMILLAS grantees were asked to consider the following:

- Address institutional capacity to sustain the effort once the SEMILLAS financial support and technical assistance ended.
- Implement or expand institutional practices they knew could make an impact on their campuses.
- Select projects that were congruent with institutional mission, context, and practices.

Key to sustaining these projects beyond the grant period was ensuring institutional commitment from the beginning, through a letter of support from the president of each institution agreeing to continue the project after the grant ended.

- In addition to a written institutional commitment from the president, each institution was asked to submit a continuation plan as part of the final report.
- At the end of the project, *Excelencia* in Education staff conducted phone interviews with the president, other senior administrators and project directors of the grantees to verify, not only the outcomes, but their commitment to continuation and sustainability.
- Only 2 of the 25 SEMILLAS programs reported they would not continue the SEMILLAS work beyond the grant funding.

The practices identified for replication served as catalysts for institutional change.

- Overt commitment from the institution's president and/or provost was a key component of sustainability and continuation of program activities beyond the life of the SEMILLAS grant.
- A small investment yielded broader and longer lasting results.
- Several institutions reported receiving SEMILLAS helped garner non-monetary or in-kind support within the institution. Further, engaging volunteers helped to keep costs down and increase the numbers of students served.
- Although effective, some of the practices are labor intensive, requiring staff time as well as dedicated funding.
- Reexamining institutional procedures to serve students better proved to be a critical step to increase the graduation of all students.

- Grantees promoted campus learning by evaluating replication results, including identification of challenges and successes.

The relationship established between the participating institutions and *Excelencia* in Education is sustaining. For example, Monroe Community College held a one-day colloquium, “Completion-Our Community’s Next Promise,” in Fall 2012 and invited *Excelencia* to be one of three Latino panelists addressing Latino student completion.

Further, many SEMILLAS grantees chose to join the *Excelencia* in Action network to continue engaging, sharing, and learning what is working for Latino students in higher education with other institutional leaders.

LEVERAGING SUPPORT

Participating institutions corroborated in their reports as well as in their feedback the importance of working in partnerships and through collaborations with both internal and external stakeholders. These partnerships led to leveraging support and resources.

Partnership

Collaborations and partnerships were necessary ingredients to achieve success. The SEMILLAS grants fostered relationships and awareness of student efforts that had positive impacts beyond the direct provision of services. For instance, it was important in most of the institutions to have buy-in from the faculty and other stakeholders to help ensure positive outcomes. Further, explicitly targeting Latino students for services through the grant increased the institutions’ visibility in the Latino community and demonstrated its commitment to serving Latino students.

For several institutions, the SEMILLAS grant meant joining non-profits and community groups for different activities, working together to eliminate barriers, and ensuring sustainability. For example:

- At Knox College several invited speakers did not charge the institution because they saw this opportunity as an essential contribution to the project. At the end of the project, the College reported savings in the grant that resulted from leveraging resources.
- SUNY Fredonia discussed building trust and credibility through the grant activities with their local school district regarding commitment to college access.

- St. Joseph College’s ¡Adelante! Program developed and strengthened relationships with different partners in both the private and public sectors to secure funding for the students.

Even before the projects were completed, several institutions were able to use their project results to secure other grants and additional external funding. Eastern Connecticut, Monroe Community College and SUNY Fredonia are institutions that built strong partnerships to make a case for investment in their projects.

- Both the success and sustainability of LaGuardia Community College’s project was dependent on the partnerships formed across the campus to ensure a seamless transition from pre-college to college degree programs. These partnerships included cross-training activities to share information and support knowledge in serving students.
- Palm Beach State College recognized that their project’s success relied on effective communications across different stakeholders. They received in-kind support from different college areas and school districts, which resulted in grant savings. Palm Beach confirmed that the grant was truly “seed money” for a larger project.
- University of Arizona summarized lessons learned about their project and the impact of collaborations: “the success of these interventions is defined by how effectively they link students to needed support structures... A project like this [Arizona Assurance Scholars Program] has the power to be a unifying force across campus, joining faculty, staff and students towards a common goal.”

Leveraging

- Modest financial investment can yield targeted impact in Latino student success
- While the funding was modest, providing external funds to overtly include Latino students in programs offered rich opportunities for institutional leaders prepared to serve those students well.
- Several institutions reported receipt of SEMILLAS grants helped garner non-monetary support, with many volunteers helping to keep costs down and increase the numbers of students served.
- Many institutions were able to secure additional internal or external funding to sustain their initiatives by leveraging their SEMILLAS grants.

SCALING UP

Institutional change is evidenced when a strategy has pervasive impact within an institution.

During and after the completion of SEMILLAS funding, several grantees shared their projects impacted different levels of the institution — promoting change.

SEMILLAS grants were designed based on the principle that institutions grow practices congruent with their missions and their contexts. Given the limited funding available to campuses, *Excelencia* in Education encouraged implementation of models already tested and found successful or known to be grounded in institutional culture. This led in large measure to successfully scaling up projects to impact more students and contributed to the continuity of many of the projects.

- Colorado State University – Pueblo funded a full time position to institutionalize the activities of their project.
- LaGuardia Community College identified as one critical outcome the cultural shift in the relationship between the non-credit and credit side of the college.

Excelencia in Education provided a solid framework based on research on evidence of effectiveness serving Latino students. But institutions had the opportunity to design their projects without following a prescriptive model. Finally,

commitment from the leadership was a key component of sustainability and continuation.

While scaling up their models, campuses discovered practices that were hindering student success.

- Colorado State University – Pueblo found that several students in the cohort left campus believing they had successfully completed degree requirements and thought they had earned a degree, even though they never received a diploma.
- Texas A&M University -Commerce realized it needed to collect more meaningful data to determine Latino student success.

Based on these discoveries, institutions had the flexibility to make adjustments to their projects along the way.

- Eastern Connecticut State University changed from providing support to students through a mentoring program to offering work-study at the campus, thus allowing the students to earn some money while working in campus offices that provided them with support.

Projects supported by SEMILLAS grants confirmed that the identified practices for replication served as a catalyst for institutional change in most instances, and could be scaled up successfully.

SOME CHALLENGES

The Growing What Works initiative was implemented during challenging economic times. Therefore, the vast majority of the challenges grantees faced were budgetary. However, several grantees also encountered leadership transitions.

Consider the following:

- Several of the institutions that had planned to support the grant effort with institutional funding were unable to do so, and had to modify their indirect support.
- Others encountered difficulty in continuing the grant activities beyond the grant period due to budget constraints.
- Some institutions reported plans to support their initiatives with “soft money,” albeit acknowledging this made these initiatives susceptible to future budget cuts.
- Institutions with budget cuts had to be very careful with funds and therefore often were under-budget and had to reallocate funds in order to spend them.
- Some of the practices supported through Walmart SEMILLAS were not viewed as core functions within the institutions, and thus were susceptible to budget challenges.
- In addition, although effective, some of the practices were more costly to institutionalize because they are labor intensive. While some were still implemented, their sustainability over time is uncertain.
- Because the grant awards were made very close to the beginning of the fall semester, several grantees found themselves unable to implement activities until the spring semester. This meant that in several cases budget extensions were requested to enable institutions to spend grant resources.
- While SEMILLAS grants were modest, several grantees returned funds at the end of the grant period. In many instances, this was due to the effective leveraging of the grants into receiving institutional funding or in-kind contributions from outside organizations that supplanted the grant funds.
- Three institutions experienced presidential transitions during 2010-11: CSU – Pueblo, University of Arizona, and San Diego State University. *Excelencia* worked closely with these institutions to ensure the program remained a core activity and had leadership support for continuation. Each of the programs managed the transition well and received continued support from their new leadership to continue the work of the SEMILLAS grant.

SUMMARY

The launch of the GWW initiative and SEMILLAS grants showed that augmenting the reach of evidence-based programs, and providing the necessary information to be transparent for others to replicate, supports existing change agents and funders within institutions to achieve their goal of increasing Latino student success. Further the success of the Growing What Works initiative underscored the critical nature of intentionality, modest financial resources, appropriate institutional support, and committed leadership.

Using Examples of *Excelencia* and SEMILLAS grants to replicate promising practices, *Excelencia* has built the country's only catalog of institutional practices that promote Latino student success. The SEMILLAS grant results are now available to other institutions and funders and being shared with other institutions through *Excelencia* in Education's Growing What Works database (www.edexcelencia.org/examples) and discussed in more detail as part of the annual ALASS (Accelerating Latino Student Success) workshop, where successful

practitioners share promising practices from their award-winning projects.

While the SEMILLAS grants were of limited time and investment, the preliminary results of the effort demonstrate the importance of creating opportunities for institutions to intentionally serve Latino students and the potential for institutions, community-based organizations, and policymakers to invest in expanding the reach of evidence-based practices to reach the educational attainment needs of the nation by accelerating Latino student success.





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