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¿Es Su Escuela Nuestra Escuela? Latino Access to Catholic Schools

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¿Es su escuela ***nuestra escuela?***[1] Latino Access to Catholic Schools[2]

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In this essay we use the framework of ideas, interests, and institutions (Heclo, 1994) to analyze the opportunities and challenges that confront Latino families and Catholic schools as they work to increase Latino enrollment. There are many ideas as to what to do to increase Latino enrollment. It is also apparent that it is in the interests of both Latino families and Catholic schools to have greater Latino enrollment. Despite the challenges of putting these ideas and interests into practice through institutional transformation, there is clear evidence that successful efforts continue to be made to increase Latino enrollment. Nonetheless, this progress seems both relatively small and at times uneven. We conclude with a consideration of how that progress can be increased further and how it can be sustained over the long term.

Keywords

Latino students, enrollment, leadership, organizational change

As indicated by any measure, the number and percent of Latino students in Catholic schools is below what one might expect. Approximately 25.8% of all students enrolled in K-12 public schools in 2014-15 are Hispanic/Latino (Education Week, 2014). However Latinos comprise only 15.3% of students enrolled in K-12 Catholic schools (McDonald & Shultz, 2015). This lower-than-expected enrollment of Latino students in Catholic schools is particularly interesting, as Latinos comprise approximately 17% of the US population, about 11.9 million households (US Census Bureau, 2015), and makes them an estimated 38% of Catholics in the US (CARA, 2015). Perhaps most significantly, a 2008 study found that 67% of all practicing Catholics in the US between the ages of 18-34 were Hispanic (Notre Dame Taskforce, 2009).

1 Is your school our school?

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Despite the large numbers of Latino Catholics in the US, only about 3% of all Latino school-age children attend a Catholic school (Notre Dame Taskforce, 2009).

Efforts to increase the enrollment of Latino students in Catholic schools are relatively new. This article focuses on initiatives of one institution—the University of Notre Dame—to address the issue of Latino families' access to Catholic schools through the Notre Dame Catholic School Advantage Program. In the sections that follow, we first discuss the establishment of the Catholic School Advantage Program. We then outline Heclo's (1994) policy analytic framework of ideas, interests, and institutions to understand the opportunities and challenges that confront Catholic schools as they attempt to increase Latino enrollment (see also Clarke, Hero, Sidney, Fraga, & Erlichson, 2006).

Based upon an understanding of policy transformation generally, and the requirements to make such transition long-lasting, the framework utilizes perceptions of actor gains and losses, ideas, and strategies to maximize gains and limit losses, and the critical need to establish new institutional structures and related organizational cultures to sustain desired ends. In applying this framework to Catholic schools, we offer a policy conceptualization that synthesizes a series of recommendations as to how Catholic schools can increase their enrollment of children from Latino families consistent with the framework of ideas, interests, and institutions. As is evident from the previous discussion and continuing efforts in cities across the country to increase Latino enrollment, ideas and interests abound as to what can be tried to increase Latino access.

Next, we highlight specific recommendations for increasing Latino enrollment based upon six years of Fr. Joe Corpora's work in this field, and especially his visits to 41 dioceses across the country, where he has given a total of 54 talks on lessons learned from schools and dioceses that have been most innovative in pursuing the goal of increasing Latino enrollment. We will highlight successes from a selected set of schools to demonstrate the impact on schools adopting these lessons.

We then develop a policy synthesis of these recommendations and challenges by categorizing these efforts along two specific dimensions of action: leadership commitment and organizational capacity. We argue that through this categorization of the many available strategies, dioceses, parishes, and schools will be better positioned to prioritize commitment and coordinate their work consistent with available resources to have maximum impact. We

conclude with a discussion of the likelihood that ideas, interests, and institutions can be sustained over the long term to continue greater access and achievement by Latino students and families in Catholic schools. We also identify major challenges that continue to limit the pace and magnitude of these efforts.

Origins of the Notre Dame Catholic School Advantage Program

In 2009, the Notre Dame Task Force on the Participation of Latino Children and Families in Catholic Schools issued a report entitled To Nurture the Soul of the Nation: Latino Families, Catholic Schools, and Educational Opportunity (Notre Dame Task Force, 2009). This report not only called for major new efforts to increase Latino enrollment, it also outlined a series of findings with direct implications for developing new strategies of expanding access to Catholic schools for Latino families. These findings were based on a general demographic analysis, information gathered through parent focus groups, a survey of principals, and an examination of selected case studies. There were four specific areas in which recommendations were issued. First, "developing demand" included personalized recruitment efforts, limiting paperwork, utilizing Spanish speakers, and using schools as community centers on evenings and weekends. In the second area,"developing access," the recommendations included filling empty seats, reopening schools that had been closed, and building new schools. Area three focused on "developing leaders," including transforming school culture to better address the needs and interests of Latino communities, recruiting Latino teachers, and better preparing teachers to work with Latino students. The fourth and final area of recommendations was "transforming Catholic schools and systems" where recommendations included developing new models of school governance, forging stronger, mutually supportive relationships between institutions of higher education and Catholic schools, and improving the technological infrastructure at Catholic schools (Notre Dame Task Force, 2009).

Soon after the report, Notre Dame established the Catholic School Advantage Campaign. An initiative of the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE), the Campaign promotes research, innovative thinking, and information dissemination regarding best principles and practices to increase Latino enrollment in Catholic schools. Its work is motivated by a central question: "What can be done to narrow the achievement gap by extending the Catholic school advantage to more Latino children?" (ACE, 2015, n. p.). The two

primary objectives of the Campaign are: (a) to "promote the unique value of Catholic schools to Latino communities," and (b) "to help schools respond effectively to the unique needs of their Latino families" (ACE, 2015, n. p.)

The Catholic School Advantage Campaign supports two ongoing programs designed to help administrators and pastors learn how to best respond to Latino families. The Latino Enrollment Institute (LEI) has been hosted at Notre Dame over the past three summers (2012-2015). Approximately 220 attendees representing 75 schools from 39 dioceses across the country have participated in LEI. A total of 34 schools attended the LEI in 2015. Additionally, the Campaign has hosted the School Pastors' Institute (SPI) for the past four years (2011-2015). A total of 385 Pastors have attended these sessions. In 2015, 130 pastors attended the SPI.

In 2013, the Alliance for Catholic Education expanded its call to increase access to Catholic schools for Latino families with a specific focus on bishops and pastors. The report Renewing Our Greatest and Best Inheritance: Our Historic Opportunity to Serve Latino Families through Catholic Schools, Strategy and Perspectives from Bishops and Pastors (ACE, 2013) is based on the reflections of four cardinals, 11 bishops, and nine pastors. Three guiding themes appeared in their discussions: (a) "embrace the urgency" of the need for more Latino families to access Catholic schools; (b) "celebrate the opportunity" that is consistent with the historical role of the American Church to serve immigrant communities; and (c) "provide authentic witness" to this work as driven by the Gospel and Jesus Christ (ACE, 2013, pp. 18-19). The report concludes with 25 specific strategies that individual pastors can use to attempt to increase Latino enrollment in their local schools. Among these strategies are: (a) ask families "gently" why their children are not enrolled in the school; (b) "extend personal invitations to prospective students and their parents" (p. 44); (c) meet and get to know members in Latino oriented movements and liturgical groups; (d) get to know community leaders; (e) "find a cultural mentor to help…better understand Latinos" (p. 45); (f) "be creative about tuition costs" (p. 46); and (g) "start a Madrinas [Godmothers] Program" (p. 47) to serve as points of contact for potential school families.

At the annual fall assembly of U.S. bishops held in Baltimore, MD, in November 2014, Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, TX, Chair of the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, and Archbishop George Lucas of Omaha, NE, Chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Catholic Education, each called for their fellow bishops to encourage more Hispanic families to send their children to Catholic schools

and to move schools to be more welcoming to diverse populations. Bishop Flores stated that encouraging enrollment "must be a priority of bishops, superintendents, pastors and principals" and "[w]elcoming more children from diverse populations in our Catholic schools and particularly making an effort to reach out to underserved communities, is important for the future of Catholic schools and of our church" (Zimmerman, 2014, p. 1). What is clear from the above discussion is that there is considerable interest and strategizing taking place to increase the access and enrollment of Latino students and families in Catholic schools.

Ideas, Interests, and Institutions in the Transformation of Catholic Schools

The call to increase Latino enrollment in Catholic schools represents a very interesting puzzle. Why did such a call need to be made? Why has more progress not been made to promote greater access by Latino families? We address this puzzle through an understanding that ideas, interests, and institutions seem to now be historically, organizationally, and financially aligned to make meaningful, significant progress in this regard.

The analytical leverage provided by a conceptual framework organized around ideas, interests, and institutions is grounded in the work of Hugh Heclo (1994). He argues that innovation that is likely to affect policy, practice, and organizational design—changes that do not happen often in most areas of American society—result not just because of the articulation of a new idea or way of approaching an issue of concern. The acceptance of a new idea very much depends upon the idea being supported—perhaps even internalized—by influential leaders, groups, and others who can expand endorsement of the new idea by articulating agreement with its goals and approach. Heclo argues, therefore, that interests, whether grounded in new popular constituencies, already established groups, or existing private organizations and public agencies, must themselves determine that they are better served by a new way of looking at an issue, before the idea begins to influence how significant stakeholders and gatekeepers view the matter of concern. It is the alignment of ideas and interests that serves to mutually enhance both the acceptance of the new understanding and broaden the base of support to pursue the idea to enact it into policy.

Heclo (1994) also makes the critically important point that it is institutions, that is, "the bearers of …traditions of practice and meaning" (p. 377),

that most often provide the context from which new ideas and related interests originate. Institutions are the "settings that privilege some options and delete others" (p. 376). This is especially the case historically. It is through institutions that we derive meaning for our preferences and often decide not only "what to choose but what to want" (p. 377). The history of institutions, in other words, can have lasting impact on what it is that we value. However, it is also the case that institutions "can…provide the means for changing ideas about our interests and our preferences" (p. 379).

We argue that the long-term impact of a new alignment of ideas and interests very much depends upon their consolidation into new institutions, that is, new organizational structures and their related cultures of operation. Only when new ways of policy and practice have been formalized into new structures of function and related distribution of responsibilities, with sufficient resources to meet those responsibilities, are we likely to see new ideas serve the long terms interests of key stakeholders. In sum, it is the convergence—or, in Heclo's words, the "intersection" (p. 375)—of ideas, interests, and institutions that helps explain why meaningful policy shifts can occur, although those shifts do not occur often, why piecemeal or marginal shifts occur more often, and why the presence of no shifts whatsoever is most often, unfortunately, the norm in much policy and practice. We now apply the framework of ideas, interests, and institutions to better explain why the earlier identified puzzle exists and what the prospects are for solving that puzzle in ways that serve the long term interests of Latino students and families as well as the interests of Catholic schools.

Ideas for Promoting Latino Access to Catholic Schools

A cursory review of the literature reveals that there are many ideas about how to increase the likelihood that Latino families will consider sending their children to Catholic schools, including specific guidance for Catholic schools about how to increase the chances that Latino families will enroll their children in those schools. Recommendations based on national explorations appear in *To Nurture the Soul of a Nation* (2009) and individual archdioceses, such as Chicago and Boston, have each developed a set of recommendations specific to their circumstances (Archdiocese of Chicago, 2015; Catholic Schools Foundation, 2015). In this section, we focus on outlining 10 of the most significant lessons learned by Fr. Corpora in his work as a primary spokesperson for Notre Dame's Catholic School Advantage Program over

the past five years. Our purpose is not to endorse any one strategy, but rather to use these examples to generate robust discussions in individual schools and dioceses about how to increase Latino enrollment in their schools. Learning from others' experiences, and adapting them to one's own circumstances, can often generate further creative ideas that can be considered in this effort to increase the access that Latino families have to Catholic schools.

Among the most important lessons that can serve as guides for schools and dioceses are the following:

1. Increasing Latino enrollment is possible. Hundreds of Catholic schools of all sizes and configurations have increased Latino enrollment over the last several years. The goal of growing Latino enrollment is attainable. Expectations must be raised to see that increasing Latino enrollment is realistic.
2. The Ordinary[3] must be supportive of the effort to increase Latino enrollment. It must also be a priority of the superintendent. The support for the effort must come from both the highest religious authority and the highest school official in the diocese.
3. The responsibility for increasing the enrollment of children from Latino families must be given to someone who has knowledge and experience with Latino communities. It cannot be the responsibility of an official within the superintendent's office who has general responsibilities for marketing and enrollment. Often principals do not have the time or depth of understanding to effectively outreach to Latino communities.
4. All pastors and principals must receive training in cultural competency as it relates to Latino communities. Although such efforts can make some Church and school leaders uncomfortable, it is critically important to expand the knowledge base of key gatekeepers whose decisions directly affect who gets admitted to Catholic schools and what amount of tuition families will be required to pay.
5. Church and school leaders must develop relationships of respect and trust with Latino families before parents will consider enrolling their children in Catholic schools. This can take time. Relationships must begin to be developed before enrollment, not after. Hispanic outreach coordinators can directly contribute to these efforts, however the

3 The Ordinary is someone who possesses ordinary executive power: for example, in a diocese or a community canonically equivalent to a diocese. In most circumstances, the ordinary is the archbishop or bishop.

perception of the receptivity of Church and school leaders to Latino families will largely determine how many Latino families will consider enrolling their children in Catholic schools.

6. The payment of tuition must be addressed as pragmatically and realistically as possible. One cannot assume that because a family inquires about enrolling children in a Catholic school that they fully understand tuition costs, monthly payment plans, other ways of contributing to the costs incurred in running a school, financial aid, and how a working class family is expected to pay for multiple children. Parents must be given the opportunity to learn about costs and how they can be paid.
7. Among the most effective ways that a school can demonstrate its willingness to recruit more Latino students is by having a fluent Spanish-speaker in the front office. This person is often the first point of contact when families initially inquire about the possibility of enrolling their child. That first interaction can determine whether any subsequent inquiry or action to enroll a child will occur.
8. Increasing Latino enrollment takes time and work. Substantial progress is rarely made within the first year. Efforts must be made to learn from both successes, and especially, mistakes. Evidence from a number of schools around the country suggests that once momentum has been made over several years, however, success begins to build upon success, and enrollments tend to grow significantly. Quick fixes are rare.
9. It is critically important that Church and school leaders have an openness of mind and heart to Latino peoples and their cultures. Stated differently, in His Providence, Latinos are whom God is sending to Catholic schools and parishes today. When the goal of increasing Latino enrollment in Catholic schools is embraced in this way, it aligns fully with the Gospel and especially recent messages from Pope Francis of building a more inclusive Catholic community. Understanding efforts to increase Latino enrollment in this way often leads to a ministerial passion to work to realize God's will.
10. Ten years ago it was rare to hear "Latino children" and "Catholic education" in the same sentence. This is not the case today. One cannot talk about the future of Catholic education in the United States without also talking about strategies to increase Latino enrollment in Catholic schools.

We suggest that these 10 lessons, as well as the wealth of other specific recommendations that appear in a number of publications and websites, can be effectively synthesized along two dimensions: leadership commitment and organizational capacity. Our purpose in outlining these two underlying dimensions is to leverage the insights gained from past and present efforts in ways that more effectively allow Church and school leaders to best focus their work to increase Latino enrollment.

The stated and active commitment of Church and school leaders to the goal of increasing Latino enrollment must start with the bishop. The bishop sets the tone in the entire diocese for how important it is for any school to bring more Latino families to Catholic education. It is the bishop who, through both words and deeds, sends signals to Church and school officials as to the importance of this goal in the diocese. Similarly, the Superintendent of Catholic Schools must fully demonstrate her/his agreement with the bishop on the need to work to increase Latino enrollment. Although the formal authority of a Superintendent of Catholic Schools is much less than that in public schools, the impact of a clear statement of support from the Superintendent sends a signal to all Catholic schools that the diocese sees its overall interests served by enrolling more Latinos. For parish schools, the pastor must also convincingly embrace the goal of increasing Latino enrollment if an entire community is to also embrace the goal. This is especially important in communities where parents of currently enrolled students may be hesitant to accept the goal given its possible implications for changes in the character of the school. Without the pastor's support, progress is very unlikely. Lastly, the school principal, teachers, and staff must also embrace the goal if there is any meaningful chance of it being implemented. One of the realities of Catholic education in the United States is that it not as much a Catholic school system, as it is a system of Catholic schools. This implies that the bishop, pastor, and school officials have considerable autonomy in how they run their schools and in how they plan for the long-term enrollment and financial sustainability of schools. Bishops and superintendents are extremely important in setting the tone for the importance of Latino enrollment, but much of the decision-making as to strategy, resource distribution, admissions decisions, and required financial contributions of families is made by local parish and school officials.

A useful way to characterize the demonstration of needed leadership commitment is to understand that it has three distinct dimensions: values, vision, and mission. Church and school officials can actively demonstrate

that their values include an acceptance that increasing Latino enrollment is possible. When one articulates this value, it overcomes the risk aversion that can constrain creative thinking and action. It is this articulation that effectively sets the tone across the diocese, in a parish, and in a school. Vision is captured by an articulation and internalization that the future of Catholic education in the United States is directly linked to increasing Latino enrollment. This demonstrates the unquestioned need of increased Latino enrollment in any commitment to the long-term sustainability of Catholic schools throughout the country and especially in areas where Latinos are concentrated. This forward-looking vision allows all of those interested in Catholic education to see that their current work has significant implications for the legacy that they will leave to later generations of all Catholics. A commitment to mission directly links increasing Latino enrollment to doing God's work. This mission dimension of commitment identifies enrollment efforts as necessary not just out of a sense of social justice, but also out of a sense of one's individual acceptance to put the Gospel into practice. Understanding Latino enrollment as part of the mission of individual Catholics as well as of the overall Church in the US inhibits the characterization that this work should be done by someone else. It personalizes the responsibility for all practicing Catholics to work within their communities to actively bring more Latino families into Catholic schools.

It is important to acknowledge that commitment alone is insufficient to increase Latino enrollment. Specific policies and practices must be enacted to increase the organizational capacity of schools to better reach and incorporate Latino families into Catholic schools. All of the suggested modifications in policies and practices must be focused on increasing and sustaining the cultural responsiveness of schools to Latino communities. Strategies related to modifications in language competency, religious icons, curriculum, tuition, and financial aid must all be driven by a full understanding and demonstrated respect of the preferences and richness of culture and especially Catholic religious practice in Latino communities.

The utility of this approach lies in displaying not a tolerance of Latino culture, but rather an integration of Latino culture into the policies and practices of the school. Just as we stated earlier that bishops and superintendents set the tone for the genuineness of a diocese's commitment to increasing Latino enrollment, school policies and practices that demonstrate organizational internalization of Latino culture send clear signals to Latino families as to whether or not they will be accepted with respect in a Catholic school.

Cultural competence is not tolerance; neither is it driven by a welcome to come into "our" school. Rather, it is a clear and visible demonstration that all school personnel know, embrace, and live their responsibilities to have more Latino families and their children as thriving members of the school community.

Evolving Interests to Promote Latino Access to Catholic Schools

Declining enrollment in Catholic schools is a direct incentive for all Catholic schools to see their interests being served by increasing Latino enrollment. As reported by the National Catholic Education Association, U.S. Catholic schools were at their highpoint of enrollment in the early 1960s with an estimated 5.2 million students across 13,000 schools. A steep decline in almost every part of the country through the 1970s and 1980s, left only an estimated 2.5 million students in Catholic schools by 1990, a decline of 52%. Similarly, the number of schools in which students could enroll declined to 8,719, a reduction of 43% over the same time period. At present there are a total of 1,939,574 students enrolled in 5,368 Catholic elementary/middle schools and 1,200 secondary schools. It is also the case that a substantial number of school closures have occurred in urban areas where many Latinos live. Between 2004 and 2014, 1,856 schools closed or were consolidated. A total of 702 of these schools were in the 12 largest urban dioceses in the US (McDonald & Shultz, 2015).

The origin of Catholic school elementary and secondary education in the United States, unlike the origin of Catholic education in almost every other country in the world, was to provide educational opportunity to predominantly Catholic, lower income, immigrant families and their children in largely urban cities (Lazerson, 1977). The marginalization of predominantly Catholic immigrant communities from mainstream schools and opportunities more broadly, the presence of growing numbers of immigrant Catholics at the same time that institutions of public education were developing, and the availability of country-of-origin religious teaching orders who could establish schools and serve as administrators and teachers at very low cost, all set the foundation of the current structure of Catholic schools in the US.

Both the historical origins of Catholic institutions of education and their current enrollment and school closure challenges, when understood in light of the present and growing number of Latino Catholic families aligns the interests of Catholic communities, including those of both Latino families

and Catholic schools. The interests of Catholic schools are clear. They need to not only fill current seats to limit further closures and consolidations, they also need a longer term plan for how they will cope with changing demographics and tap into the growing Latino population. In the 2007–2008 academic year, it was estimated that over 691,000 seats were empty in operating Catholic schools around the country (Notre Dame Task Force, 2009). No doubt, the income status and multiple-child family structures of Latinos make the capacity to easily pay full school tuition, the primary source of revenue for the vast majority of Catholic schools today, a challenge. However, the alternatives of continuing empty seats and the possibility of closure or consolidation makes increased Latino enrollment a positive gain for Catholic schools.

Available data also suggests that Latino students, on the average, do much better in Catholic schools than they do in public schools. Although it is difficult to overcome the potential biases of self-selection, studies have found that a Latino student has a higher likelihood of graduating from both high school and college if he/she attends Catholic schools as compared to public schools (Evans & Schwab, 1995; Neal, 1997; Sander & Krautman, 1995). It is also important to note that studies find that students who graduate from Catholic schools tend to be more civically engaged, tolerant of diverse views, and committed to community service as adults (Campbell, 2001; Wolf, Greene, Kleitz, & Thalhammer, 2001). There is little question that the direct benefit to Latino students of attending a Catholic school are long lasting. Latino families have a direct interest in having their children attend Catholic schools.

Building Institutions to Promote Latino Access to Catholic Schools

What follows are specific examples in which ideas and interests converged to transform institutions with the specific goals of being more welcoming and responsive to Latino students and their families in order to increase the enrollment of Latino students. These examples, chosen from a collection of school profiles maintained by the Catholic School Advantage Campaign (Catholic School Advantage, 2015), serve as evidence of the creativity, innovation, and risk-taking needed to work towards increasing Latino enrollment. Without a doubt, clear leadership commitment and growing organizational capacity to serve Latino students were essential elements in placing these schools on paths to institutional transformation.

St. Vincent De Paul, Archdiocese of Portland, OR. In 2010, the school was on the brink of closure with only 30 students enrolled. At one time in its history, there were 800 students. A new principal was hired who attended the Latino Enrollment Institute (LEI) at Notre Dame. After one year they doubled school enrollment and in the second year they were able to triple it. Among the strategies used to promote greater Latino enrollment were: (a) speaking at all English- and Spanish-language masses about the school to encourage parents to consider the school, (b) organizing a school sponsored barbecue open to all, and (c) building stronger relationships with parish councils and commissions.

All Saints Catholic School, Diocese of Richmond, VA. Although the numbers are small, Latino enrollment has increased by 45% from 2013–2015 to a total of 25% of the entire school. All Saints pursued strategies of working closely with the pastors of two local parishes. There was active promotion of the school at masses. Additionally, a Latino-focused advocate was contracted to serve as the bilingual-bicultural liaison between Latino families and the school. This advocate worked directly with families through school application and enrollment processes. The advocate also worked directly with families to ensure that they applied for all available financial assistance through a diocesan program.

St. Cecilia, Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Since the 2011–12 school year, Latino enrollment has grown from five to 50 students; Latinos now comprise 28% of all students at the school. Among the actions that were taken to increase Latino enrollment were developing marketing materials in Spanish, establishing a tuition assistance program from within the parish, and expanding communication strategies to include Latino specific, Spanish language outreach. Pastoral leadership was key to reinvigorating the parish's commitment to the school and to place the school at the center of parish life.

St. Gertrude the Great, Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Since July 2011, enrollment at the school has grown from 42 to 176 students. Latinos comprise the vast majority of students at the school and come largely from first-generation immigrant families. In direct consultation with a Notre Dame field consultant, a Madrinas program was established. Among the most effective strategies utilized by the Madrinas was to personally spread the word of the availability of schooling for all families at St. Gertrude. The traditional school letter was not just translated into Spanish, other explicit examples of outreach to and respect for Latino families included strategically placing a banner of the Virgen de Guadalupe at the school as well as translat-

ing the statements of the mission and vision of the school into Spanish. The principal served as a primary source of leadership and engagement to build a passion in the faculty for serving the most vulnerable and underserved populations.

St. Mary Catholic School, Archdiocese of Los Angeles. This school is 97% Latino. It was able to continue on a path of increasing enrollment by working directly with foundations and other charitable organizations to make scholarships widely available. The principal also went door-to-door visiting Latino families to invite and support their applying and enrolling in the school. Among the most innovative actions taken at the school was having students send cards to newly baptized children to encourage their parents to send them to the school when they were of age. Students sent similar cards to newly married couples asking them to consider sending their children to the school. The school also invested in expanding its education-related technology and software. The most effective recruitment was achieved through word of mouth communication.

Our Lady of the Angels, Diocese of Brooklyn. Fifty percent of students enrolled at this school are Latino. Enrollment has increased by 10% since 2012. Early childhood programs were expanded at the school to address the needs of many families where both parents work. The school administration and faculty actively worked to demonstrate knowledge of and respect for the diverse cultures and languages reflected in family backgrounds.

St. Therese Catholic School, Archdiocese of Denver. Latino enrollment has increased in this school since 2013. The pastor, principal, and Director of Hispanic Ministry spoke at both Spanish- and English-language masses about the importance of Catholic education. The parish began celebrating the feast day of the Virgen de Guadalupe and Las Posadas during Christmas. This was part of a larger strategic effort to demonstrate cultural responsiveness to Latino families by both the parish and the school. The school hired bilingual staff members, including two teacher aides and a cafeteria manager. Parent volunteers welcomed and translated for parents who inquired about applying and enrolling their children at the school. The school also established a Madrinas program.

St. John Vianney Catholic School, Diocese of Phoenix. Since 2012-13, enrollment at this school has increased by 50%, including a 68% increase in Latino enrollment. Latinos now comprise 84% of all students at the school. The active engagement of the pastor has been a critical factor contributing to the growth of Latinos in the school. The pastor, for example, utilized the

600–700 children enrolled in religious education classes as a base of recruitment to the school. The pastor also worked to put the continued success of the school at the center of parish life. Bilingual volunteers helped complete paperwork. The school also benefitted significantly from robust tax credit scholarships from the state. School staff and volunteers made it a priority to assist new and continuing families to apply for all financial aid available.

St. Pius X School, Diocese of Tulsa. Over the past three years, enrollment has increased by an annual rate of 6%. There has, however, been an increase of 160% over the same time period in Latino enrollment and Latinos now constitute 10% of all students at the school. The active engagement of both the pastor and the principal were key to increasing Latino enrollment. Latino families were actively encouraged to enroll their children at the school at masses and in conversations with parishioners. Latino families with children currently enrolled at the school have also actively encouraged other Latino families to consider enrolling their children at the school.

St. Rosa of Lima Catholic School, Diocese of Sioux City, IA. Over the past four years, overall enrollment at the school has increased by a total of 61%. Latino enrollment has increased by 123% with Latino students now constituting 62% of all students at the school. Among the key actions that were taken to increase Latino enrollment were to actively communicate in Spanish at masses, in press releases, and among school staff. Cultural celebrations were also added to school activities. A Madrinas program was established at the school.

St. Ambrose Academy, Diocese of Madison, WI. Among the strategies that were implemented to increase Latino enrollment at the school were targeted marketing, personal invitations to Latino families to visit the school, monthly school tours, and monthly faculty lectures that are available to the public. The school also fully utilizes Latino parents with children currently enrolled at the school as ambassadors. The social networks of these families and their relationships with other parishioners have been effective in promoting outreach.

What these examples make very clear is that the pastor and the school principal must identify increasing Latino enrollment as a parish and school goal. Further, school leadership must implement strategies to achieve this goal by increasing the organizational capacity of the school to more effectively reach and integrate Latino families. Leaders had to acknowledge that previous efforts at advertising, recruiting, and engaging families were insufficient to increase Latino enrollment. Those with direct responsibilities for

the operation and future success of the school had to accept responsibility for actively catalyzing the school's transformation. Stated differently, committed leadership and enhanced organizational capacity were the active expressions of the convergence of ideas, interests, and institutions to increase Latino enrollment. Leaders learned about new ideas, further developed them in their parish and school communities, consistently articulated how the interests of the school were better served through increased Latino enrollment, and then implemented specific strategies of policy and practice to transform the school as an institution. It was not just the new ideas or the articulation of new interests alone that catalyzed change. Those with direct authority and power to provide Catholic education worked directly to establish new responsibilities and formal structures to permanently transform how that education was provided.

Increasing Latino Access and Enrollment in Catholic Schools: Lessons Learned from the CSA

A number of significant challenges remain in efforts to increase Latino enrollment in Catholic schools. We discuss a number of these challenges by posing questions that also serve as important lessons learned from the work of the CSA program at the University of Notre Dame.

What is the socio-historical context within which enrollment efforts are being pursued?

In the spring of 2010, the CSA began its work focusing on the three large urban archdioceses that had many Latino families and thousands of empty seats in their schools. They were seen as having "low hanging fruit" where it was thought that enrollment could be significantly increased with modest effort and at modest costs. However, increasing Latino enrollment in these dioceses was not straightforward. Many Latino families, longtime residents of the targeted neighborhoods, held beliefs that Catholic schools were unaffordable for working class families. Further, the CSA found that these dioceses tended to have larger bureaucracies that made initiating new efforts cumbersome.

In subsequent years, the CSA received additional requests from mid-size to smaller dioceses, some only recently experiencing significant growth in their Latino populations. The CSA, in response, began to work with these dioceses, which included Joliet, Illinois, Jefferson City, Missouri, Oakland,

California, Bridgeport, Connecticut, Dallas, Texas, and Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana. CSA staff members were surprised by the small dioceses' eager reception of ideas for increasing Latino enrollment. The substantial growth of Latino families in their pews was new; there was a greater openness to the mission of enrolling more Latinos in Catholic schools and considering strategies for recruiting and welcoming Latino students to Catholic schools. The small dioceses were more willing to explore and experiment than were the large, urban ones.

What the leaders of the CSA campaign learned was that recruiting, welcoming, and enrolling Latino students and families to Catholic schools cannot be done with a one-size-fits-all strategy. There are different approaches and strategies based not only on the size of the diocese, but on how long Latinos have been part of the particular diocese. What works in dioceses where Latino communities are established and have lived and prayed for many generations might not work in dioceses where Latinos are mostly immigrants and have lived there for only one or two generations. As Father Corpora has stated on a number of occasions, "If you have seen one diocese, you have seen one diocese." There is a clear need for multiple strategies to increase Latino enrollment that fully include the unique historical and contemporary contexts of Latino presence across the entire United States. Knowing what works in a specific diocese or school is helpful, but may not be applicable to other dioceses or schools.

How can CSA expand its capacity to respond to ever growing demand?

Over the last several years the CSA has received many requests to speak in dioceses and schools across the country. It is safe to say that the vast majority of bishops and superintendents in the country are wondering how to invite Latinos into Catholic schools. Ten years ago, the words Latino and Catholic schools would not have been in the same sentence or even on the same page. This is all very different today.

The requests for teaching cultural competency and the requests to come to dioceses that ask for assistance have grown much faster than the CSA's ability to build capacity to effectively respond. Moreover, CSA has not been strategic in responding to requests from bishops and superintendents. As a result, much of the response has been determined by personal relationships. While this is not necessarily bad, it is not an intentional strategy driven by a systematic analysis of need and capacity.

The CSA has yet to develop a set of principles that would guide its response to requests. Answers to questions such as the following should be considered as part of a strategy of building the capacity of the CSA to respond. How large does the Latino population in a diocese need to be for CSA efforts to have the greatest potential impact on increasing Latino enrollment? Is there an ideal range of empty seats in Catholic schools that can guide prioritizing requests for assistance? The vast majority of dioceses have at least 10% empty seats in their schools. Many have far more than 10%. Does the larger Alliance for Catholic Education Program (ACE), of which the CSA is a part, already work in other areas in the diocese? For example, are there ACE teachers or principals in the schools? The presence of a prior relationship may be among the best indicators of the openness of a diocese or school to developing new strategies to grow Latino presence in their schools. As stated earlier, the commitment of the bishop and superintendent can be critical to determining the potential success of any effort. How should the commitment of these school officials be assessed? What should be done if there is little evidence that their commitment is substantial?

Thus far, the primary spokesperson for CSA's efforts to increase Latino enrollment has been Fr. Corpora. His 19 years as a pastor—12 in the Diocese of Phoenix, which has a substantial Latino population, and seven in the Archdiocese of Portland, which has a growing Latino population—gives him great credibility with church and school officials. Should other priests with similar experiences be trained to also serve as spokespeople for the CSA's efforts to increase Latino enrollment? Should a set of speakers, such as superintendents and principals who have successfully increased Latino enrollment, be trained to provide additional guidance? Might webinars and training videos also serve as important means to respond to the increasing requests for guidance in how to increase Latino enrollment?

What is unquestionably clear is that demand has not decreased. There is every reason to think that it will only increase as Latino families become greater and greater percentages of practicing Catholics in the United States. If the CSA's capacity is not built quickly, it might miss the opportunity to better serve Latino families and the Church today and in the future.

How can partnerships with other organizations be developed to expand the breadth and depth of the work to increase Latino enrollment in Catholic schools?

The mission of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) is to help people get out of the cycle of poverty. The CCHD operates under the auspices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Education can serve as a primary means to elevate families out of poverty. In 2013, the Director of the CCHD approached the CSA and asked about developing a partnership. Two proposals were submitted to the CCHD. One proposal was for a three-day gathering of Latina, community-based liaisons to Catholic schools, commonly known as Madrinas, from around the country. The logic behind this was to have these Madrinas share best principles and practices with one another to build more effective strategies and programs to increase Latino enrollment. As stated earlier, Madrinas have been especially successful in using their status and cultural capital to bring more Latino families to Catholic schools. This program was not funded.

The CCHD did fund the second proposal to hire four field consultants, each in a separate diocese around the country. Such field consultants have been used in the past to work with superintendents, school boards, principals, and teachers to develop appropriate Latino outreach, recruitment, and enrollment strategies specific to the unique contexts of an individual diocese and its schools. CSA provided a sample job description and each diocese hired its own consultant. The four archdioceses that received the funding were Seattle, Washington, Richmond, Virginia, Oakland, California, and Camden, New Jersey. These are distinct dioceses with their unique histories and challenges regarding Catholic education. These four dioceses were chosen because of their respective bishop's demonstrated commitment to work to increase Latino enrollment as part of the pastoral mission of the Church. The grant is for three years with the expectation is that the respective superintendent's office will subsequently hire the consultant as a permanent member of the staff.

These consultants are in their first year. It is too soon to evaluate the success of this partnership. The CSA well appreciates the risk that a consultant will not be hired full time by the superintendent's office, even if they are successful. The budgetary demands on the superintendent's office can be severe. It is also a risk that in hiring such a consultant, school officials will place all responsibility for Latino recruitment on this person and minimize their own

commitment and action to increase Latino enrollment. Nonetheless, there will be much to be learned from their experiences. It is the partnership with the CCHD that gives the CSA the opportunity to experiment in this important and innovative way.

How should a national training session to increase Latino enrollment be structured?

In the summer of 2012, the CSA offered its first Latino Enrollment Institute (LEI), targeting schools that had upwards of 100 empty seats and a principal who was committed to enroll more Latino children and who was seeking further guidance as to how to do this most effectively. A total of fifteen schools sent the principal and two other staff members for the four-day meeting at Notre Dame. Each school was assigned a mentor principal with whom they would speak monthly, both to track progress and to aid in implementation of the Latino recruitment strategies developed that summer. All of the principals returned to Notre Dame in February 2013, for a three-day "refresher" and a chance to check-in with CSA staff and their mentor principals.

In the summer of 2013, the CSA welcomed its second LEI cohort to campus. There were 33 schools in attendance. Again, each principal was accompanied by one or two staff members and was assigned a mentor principal. They worked closely together for one year. In addition to a monthly phone conversation, each mentor principal visited her/his school once during the year. The LEI was held again in 2014 and 2015. Catholic Extension, a national organization serving mission dioceses around the country, also partnered with LEI to bring 10 mission schools from around the country to the session. These mission schools are unlikely to have had the opportunity to attend the LEI were it not for the support of Catholic Extension.

The LEI is held over four days and includes a series of talks and presentations given by principals who have successfully increased Latino enrollment at their schools. These principals are, therefore, credible witnesses to what is possible and what can work. The topics addressed include: making your school culturally competent, rethinking advancement and development, working with Latino families and children, and English as a New Language, among others. Each school pays a fee of $250 to participate. A foundation and other monies pay the largest share of the LEI expenses.

Over the past four years, Latino enrollment has increased in Catholic schools nationwide by about 2%. It has gone up 8% in schools that have participated in the LEI. Because the LEI has been so successful the CSA has hired a full-time person to direct it with the hope of having two LEIs each summer at Notre Dame and offering an LEI on the road. This person is also responsible for following and supporting LEI schools more diligently. Although getting together to share ideas and develop strategies is undoubtedly useful, there is no formal process of evaluating the effectiveness of the LEI. Some schools that have participated have seen their enrollment increase significantly and others have experienced only modest gains. New ideas are wonderful, but if they are not directly linked to new sources of funding, the continuing fiscal challenges that many Catholic schools face places constraints on what can be done to pursue identified goals.

What impact are all of these efforts having on increasing Latino enrollment in Catholic schools?

Funders and other stakeholders are, generally, interested in numbers. Knowing impact per dollar invested, patterns of Latino student completion, the retention of Latino students and families in Catholic schools, for example, are all extremely important metrics. Although gathering such data is not easy, additional efforts must be undertaken to facilitate the systematic gathering of as much data as possible.

When measuring impact, however, there is more to measure than numbers. It is not possible to measure openness the same way that one would measure enrollment gains, though it may be even more important. Openness is a precursor to enrollment gains. The desire to understand and accept another culture may be the most important predictor that leads to enrollment gains. In some dioceses and schools impact is, perhaps, best measured by whether or not the principal stops referring to Mexicans as "those Spanish people" because, as Fr. Corpora says in many of his talks, "for God's sake, they're not Spaniards!" In other places, impact may be best measured by the diocesan commitment to an initiative. In yet other places, impact is, in fact, best measured by enrollment gains. It is important to remember that the starting point for initiating these efforts is not the same across all dioceses. We do know that enrollment gains are slower than many had initially hoped. Perhaps it is best to understand that these efforts are setting the stage for a great enrollment gain in the next decade. It seems possible that the work of

many of those interested in increasing Latino enrollment are paving the way to a better future, asking people to think differently, inviting people to see through a different lens.

When this work began in 2010, the goal was to increase the number of Latino children by 1,000,000 in 10 years. It is very unlikely that this will happen. The number will go up, but most likely, not by that amount. According to the 2014–2015 report from the National Catholic Education Association, enrollment in Catholic schools has dropped 2% since 2010. The percentage of Latino children, over that same time period, has increased by 16%. By any measure, increases in Latino enrollment are, at best, modest. Nonetheless, it is very likely that attitudes are being changed. Minds and hearts continue to open to the goal of increasing Latino enrollment in Catholic schools.

Measuring changes in attitudes and in minds and hearts is very problematic. But we know this: any change in practice begins with a change in attitude, in both the mind and the heart. It is one thing to welcome Latino students to your school because you have empty seats. It is an entirely different matter to welcome Latino students because you believe that, in His Providence, God has sent Latinos to the US. In other words, the Latino presence in the United States is not so much because of fleeing civil wars in Latin American countries or just looking for a "better" life. The growth in the Latino population in the United States, rather, is because of Divine Providence. Increasing Latino enrollment, in our view, must be understood as simply a necessary, and long overdue, part of the ministry of the Catholic Church in the United States.

It is apparent that more and more archbishops, bishops, pastors, superintendents, and principals see the presence of Latino students and families in Catholic schools as an asset, not a deficit. Rather than asking, "How are we going to serve this different population?" they are saying, "the presence of Latinos is a real asset to my school."

When this work began, many could only see metrics in numbers and related graphs. By the grace of God, we have come to see that what matters most is the conversion of minds and hearts—however difficult it is to measure that change in a systematic way. That may, in fact, be okay. The numbers should follow the conversion of minds and hearts. Nonetheless, the numbers matter too. Without the numbers, we will never know if the conversion of hearts and minds in fact does lead to increases in Latino enrollment in Catholic schools.

Can *su escuela* ever be *nuestra escuela?*

In this article, we use the framework of ideas, interests, and institutions to assess the prospects that Latino access to Catholic schools can be enhanced by both increasing the desire of Latino families to send their children to Catholic schools and by increasing the likelihood that Catholic schools will accept Latino students and help them thrive. The data on trends in the growth of Catholics in the US and the simultaneous decline in enrollment in Catholic schools provides incentives to both Latino families and Catholic schools to look to each other for symbiotic support. The most significant source of growth in those who identify as Catholic as well as current demographic patterns among practicing Catholics point to Latinos as the future of the Catholic Church in the US. If more Latino families do not enroll their children in Catholic schools, it is likely that the current trend of declining enrollments and school closures and consolidations will continue. As best we can determine, Latino students thrive in Catholic schools. The clear interests of both Latino families and Catholic schools are served by working with each other to increase Latino enrollment further.

We also demonstrate that ideas are plentiful as to the specific strategies and modifications in policies and practices that can be used by schools to attract more Latino students. It is clear that there is not one set of ideas that is likely to work in every school. However, there are two dimensions to these ideas that characterize the most critical elements of current efforts to achieve gains in Latino enrollment: leadership commitment and enhanced organizational capacity. Our review of a number of efforts that have resulted in greater Latino enrollment reveals that leadership commitment and enhanced organizational capacity must both occur if progress is to be made. Both commitment and capacity building are apparent.

Our examination of efforts to increase Latino enrollment in Catholic schools reveals that there is a convergence of ideas, interests, and institutions in many places around the country. Progress is being made. It is intentional, strategic, and evidence-driven. However, one must also acknowledge, based upon the current data of Latino access to Catholic schools, that although the trend is in the right direction, progress is slow and uneven. The efforts of the CSA at Notre Dame, as one example, demonstrate how important Catholic institutions of higher education can be in promoting new ideas, identifying supportive interests, and developing additional, innovative institutional relationships and structures that can serve dioceses and schools who want

to increase Latino enrollment. However, there is a clear need for a more systematic assessment of the effectiveness and sustainability of these efforts. Why does progress continue to be so slow? We offer three possible reasons.

First, the current structure of Catholic education across the United States gives great autonomy to parish and school leaders. Our article revealed that there are many leaders who have committed to increasing Latino enrollment. But it also is clear that there are many schools that do not see it in their interest to do so. Schools with stable and predictable school enrollments, robust budgets, and firm standing as one of the most selective schools in an area can continue to succeed in serving traditional populations. The continuing upward mobility of many Catholics as well as the growth of more admission-selective Catholic schools, especially high schools, to be schools of choice among non-Catholics who are attracted by college-preparatory curricula and academic status, can provide a stable and tuition-paying base for some schools. Within the same diocese, thriving schools can coexist with school closures and consolidations. Thriving schools can also exist without expanding their enrollment to the growing number of Latino families. Those dioceses and schools that are facing overall challenges of declining enrollment seem to be the ones that are most interested in increasing Latino enrollment. Few ideas exist to build collaborative bridges of interest across resource-secure and resource-challenged dioceses and schools.

Second, the financial demands of running Catholic schools provide incentives to schools to accept students from families who are most likely to pay full tuition. Given the working class status of many Latino Catholic families, their interests are not easily integrated with the financial realities of many Catholic schools. Innovative financing structures, including fair pay tuition policies, external financial aid through private foundations and publicly financed vouchers, and in-kind services by families in lieu of tuition, can help mediate the extent to which a family's ability to pay limits the extent to which they may choose to send children to Catholic schools and the extent to which a Catholic school will accept students of high financial need. Catholic education was affordable to lower income, immigrant communities through the 1960s largely because of the low administrator, teacher, and other labor costs, due to the prevalence of priests, brothers, and nuns who served as educators. They worked in these capacities as part of their ministries. That is not the case today and it is unrealistic to expect it to return. The demands of annually balancing the school budget likely serve to slow down the number of commitments made by parish and school leaders to increase Latino enrollment further.

Third, there is a clear need for additional models of governance, financing, and curriculum design if we are to see greater successes from efforts to recruit and enroll more Latino students in Catholic schools. If cross-class, cross-community, intercultural relationships are to be developed to overcome the challenges discussed above, it is very unclear that the preponderance of parish-based K-8 systems of governance are appropriate. The parish-based model is driven by neighborhoods. As neighborhoods in many urban areas, for example, become more segregated by ethnicity, race, and social class, a mismatch between needs and resources is further institutionalized by a parish-based system. Without a doubt, a number of very successful efforts have been pursued to establish diocesan-based foundations that contribute substantially to financial aid. This is certainly an example of a cross-sector sharing of resources. However, the amount of aid that is made available may be far smaller than what is needed to support schools that want to increase Latino enrollment substantially. New strategies of resource sharing and new models of outreach and recruitment that build cross-sector collaborative interests at the school level are few and far between. In fact, no one has estimated what the actual dollar cost would be to increase Latino enrollment substantially within an entire diocese. Again, it is likely that resource sharing across different parishes would be needed to make it possible for more Latino students to enroll in Catholic schools.

It is apparent that the vast majority of the strategies to increase Latino enrollment described in this essay are driven by a top-down understanding of how to promote change in Catholic education. The emphasis is on changing the hearts and minds of current stakeholders including bishops, superintendents, and teachers. It might be the case that there is a need for an additional set of changes in policy and practice that are more directly driven by Latino families and communities. It seems likely that without the greater inclusion of the lived experiences, expectations, and aspirations of Latino parents and their children, recommendations of how to increase, and especially sustain, Latino enrollment can run the risk of being misinformed, however much they are undoubtedly driven by good will. There is also a clear need for more surveys of Latino families who do and who do not have children in Catholic schools to enrich our thinking on strategies to increase Latino enrollment. The greater use of focus groups to further inform the development of such strategies is likely to produce better thinking as well.

Most of the above-described strategies to increase Latino enrollment do not deal in a systematic way with the challenges all schools, Catholic and

non-Catholic, face in better integrating cultural diversity and competence among administrators, teachers, staff, and school curricula. Latinos, like all communities, are more likely to enroll their children in schools where they see people like themselves in positions of responsibility, leadership, and clear decision-making influence. Parish and school officials with greater cultural capital are no guarantee that Latino family experiences will be characterized by feelings of inclusion and responsiveness. The probability, however, is likely to be much higher if parish and school officials have greater experience living, working, and having their origins in Latino communities. How does one add more culturally competent administrators, teachers, and staff when resources are constrained? Stated differently, strategies that give more Latino families the chance to sit at the table of Catholic education are likely to be limited in sustaining their involvement if the meal served at the table is unfamiliar. At the same time that effective strategies are pursued to provide more seats, the meal, and who prepares it, need to change as well.

It seems appropriate that we should end our article with the conclusion that the key to increasing and sustaining increased Latino enrollment requires a commitment to continuous learning from both successes and failures. Learning is, at the end of the day, the fundamental goal of increasing Latino enrollment in Catholic schools. The learning, however, is not restricted to students in the classroom. It must extend, perhaps even more critically, to diocesan, parish, and school leaders who structure opportunities and experiences in Catholic education for all students, including those from Latino families.

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