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Latino Students in Catholic Postsecondary Institutions

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Catholic educational institutions play an important role in educating Latino high achieving students. Latino students attending Catholic high schools are more likely to graduate and transition to college immediately following high school. Few studies have examined the outcomes of Latino students who attend Catholic colleges and universities and whether the same level of success experienced by Latinos at the secondary level is also a prevalent phenomenon at the postsecondary level. Using secondary data from the National Center for Education Data Statistics on high schools, SAT data, and data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDs), this article explores the college readiness levels, transition-to-college rates of Latinos attending Catholic high schools, and outcomes for Latinos who attended select Catholic doctoral-granting institutions. Longitudinal cohort data is examined to explore these outcome data for Latino students compared to national averages, and across doctoral institutions which account for 5.1% of all Catholic postsecondary institutions. Among the key findings, Latino students who enroll in Catholic colleges and universities have higher four-year and six-year degree completion rates, yet Latino enrollment rates remain smaller than the proportion of Latinos at the high school level in the K–12 sector. Recommendations are discussed to improve the overall outcomes of Latinos in Catholic universities.

Keywords

Postsecondary education, Latinos, transition to college, college completion

Latino students in higher education are largely underrepresented across all postsecondary sectors compared to their growing composition in the K–12 sector. Latino students represented 25% of K–12 students in 2012 and only 16% of students in higher education (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014). This level of limited parity with the overall base of students in the nation has larger implications for the well-being of the next generation of Latinos (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Because Latino students are expected to represent over 30% of K–12 students by

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2023 (NCES, 2014), this population will also become increasingly important to ensuring the viability of select institutions within the postsecondary sector. Catholic institutions, because of their longstanding success with Latino students in the K–12 sector, and high college completion rates in the postsecondary sector, represent a viable higher education option to meet the needs of select high achieving Latino students in the US.

While overall transition to college rates among Latino students have increased in the past decade (Fry & Lopez, 2012), college enrollment rates among Latino students have largely grown in the community college sector (Contreras, 2011; Contreras, Regade, Lee, & McGuire, 2011; Flores, Horn, & Crisp, 2006) and less selective four-year institutions. The problem, however, with higher transition to college rates to community colleges is the low persistence, achievement, and transfer rates in this sector for Latino students, both historically and presently (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gándara, Driscoll, & Alvarado, 2012). In addition, Latino students in community colleges have a greater likelihood of working over 20 hours per week (Contreras et al., 2011). As a result, community college attendance has led to longer time-to-degree rates for Latinos. The average national time-to-degree completion rate for Chicano/Latino college students is nine years (Contreras et al., 2011).

It is important, therefore, to explore the benefits for Latino students directly transitioning to colleges in the four-year sector, where persistence rates are higher, completion is more likely, and less time is taken to earn degrees. It is also important to explore how Catholic colleges and universities are serving Latino students in order to understand any unique approaches or outcomes. This article addresses the overarching question about the status of Latino students attending Catholic colleges and universities in the United States with respect to college enrollment and completion in an effort to understand the role and potential of this sector for raising overall rates of Latino college engagement, success, and completion.

Understanding Latino College Transition, Choice, & Completion

Several bodies of literature inform this empirical analysis, including literature on college choice, transition, social capital, and college completion. Together, these areas of inquiry inform this exploratory study on the overall presence, integration, and outcomes of Latino students who choose to enroll in Catholic colleges and universities. While the overall population of students in Catholic universities has nearly doubled since 1965 (CARA,

2015), it remains unclear whether Latino students have also experienced a significant level of growth in the proportion of students enrolling in Catholic postsecondary institutions. Moreover, as public universities like the University of California (UC) system continue to shut out Latino and underrepresented resident students from their campuses (Contreras, et. al., 2015), Catholic colleges and universities may play a critical role in enrolling these Chicano/Latino high achieving students.

Latino Students and the Transition to College

For many Latino students in the United States, the transition to college has long been a daunting process. Because close to 80% of the Latino students in public schools today are the children of immigrant parents (Gándara & Contreras, 2009), the college transition process is perceived to be difficult, with a substantial "college knowledge gap" among Latino parents and families (Contreras, 2012). However, Latino parents are vital partners in this process, as many believe in the value of higher education and support their children's transitions to college. While more Latino students are transitioning to college, these rates have not kept pace with those of non-Latino students due to high drop out rates and low college readiness rates. Figure 1 shows the immediate transition to college rates by race/ethnicity from 1990-2013.

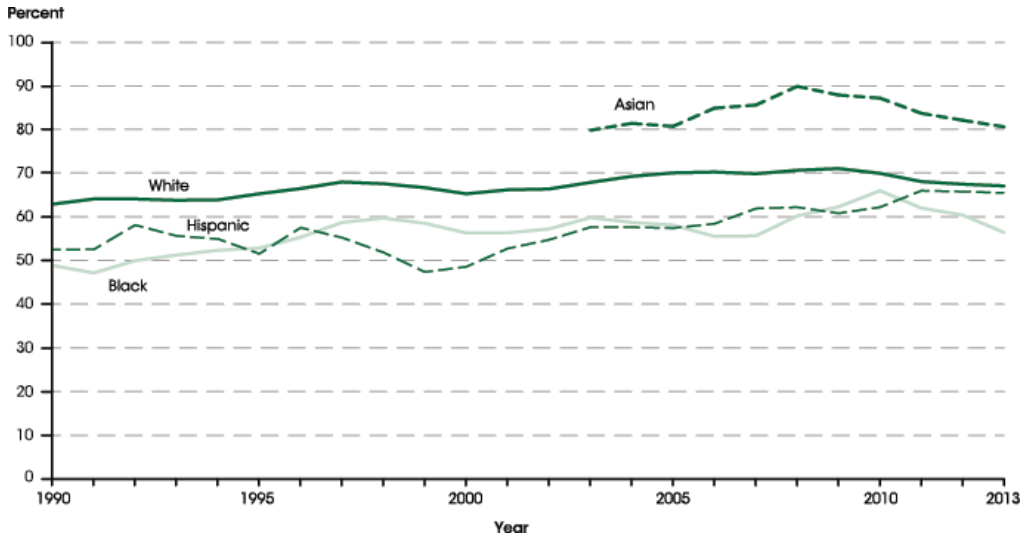

Figure 1. Immediate transition to college rates by race/ethnicity, 1990-2013. Figure 1 is from The Condition of Education 2015, by G. Kena et al., 2015, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015144.pdf. Copyright 2015 by U.S. Department of Education. Reprinted with Permission.

Latino Enrollment in Catholic Schools

Enrollment in Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the United States has steadily declined since 1965 (see Table 1). It is important to note that Catholic school enrollment at the elementary level has declined by half over the past 50 years, while secondary school enrollment has remained relatively flat. Also noteworthy is the steady, but incremental increase in Latino student enrollment in this Catholic elementary and secondary schools (CARA, 2015) (Table 1).

Table 1

Student Enrollment in Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the United States, 1965-2014

	Year										
School type	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014
Catholic Elementary	10,667	9,366	8,414	8,022	7,764	7,395	6,964	6,793	6,122	5,889	5,368
Catholic Secondary	1,527	1,986	1,624	1,549	1,425	1,324	1,280	1,297	1,325	1,205	1,200

Note. Adapted from "Frequently Requested Church Statistics," by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). Retrieved from http://cara.georgetown.edu/caraservices/requestedchurchstats.html.

Latinos have a long-standing relationship with the Catholic Church. Faith based practices and traditions among Latinos in the United States have been closely interrelated with the Catholic Church. Approximately 34% of all Catholics in the US are Hispanic/Latino (Lipka 2015). Even though proportionally, the percentage of Latinos in the Catholic Church has declined over the past decade, (Funk & Martinez, 2014), the number of Latinos who remain engaged with the Catholic church and its elementary and secondary schools in particular, remains relatively high compared to other underrepresented or diverse ethnic groups (See Table 2). Catholic schools have played a critical role for Latino students and families, and Catholicism remains a strong feature intertwined with the culture of Chicano/Latino communities (Matovina, 2012). In 2012, for example, of Latino students enrolled in private elementary and secondary schools, 60 percent were enrolled in Catholic institutions (see Figure 2).

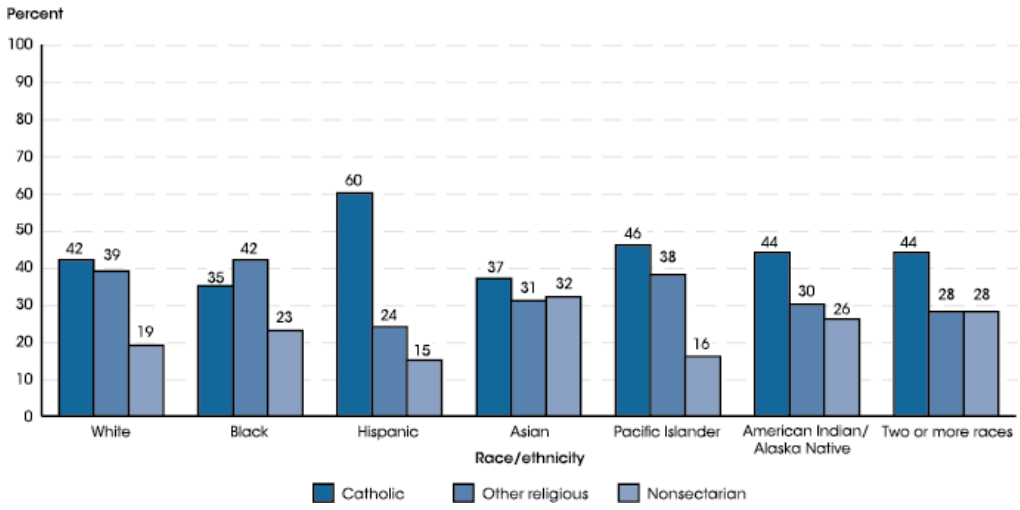

Figure 2. Percentage of distribution of private elementary and secondary enrollment, by race/ethnicity and school type, 2011-2012. Figure 2 is from The Condition of Education 2015, by G. Kena et al., 2015, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015144.pdf. Copyright 2015 by U.S. Department of Education. Reprinted with Permission.

Part of the challenge with unpacking the data on Latino students in Catholic schools is that the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) includes the Latino community within the White race category, or multiracial category in its surveys. The NCEA separates the race analysis from ethnicity in their numbers. This makes Latinos the largest underrepresented group enrolled in Catholic institutions, followed by Black students with 7.3% of Elementary/Middle school students, and 8.8% of Secondary schools (see Table 2).

Table 2

Catholic School Enrollment and Percentages by Race, 2015

	Elementary/Middle		Secondary		All Schools	
Race	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
American Indian/ Native Alaskan	10,762	0.8	3,276	0.6	14,038	0.7
Asian	67,277	4.9	32,927	5.7	100,204	5.2
Black	99,356	7.3	51,116	8.8	150,472	7.8
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific islander	11,669	0.9	3,477	0.6	15,413	0.8
Multiracial	86,897	6.4	29,203	5.0	116,100	6.0
White	998,396	73.4	422,788	72.9	1,421,184	73.3
Unknown	85,612	6.3	36,551	6.3	122,163	6.3
Total	1,359,969	100.0	579,605	100.0	1,939,574	100

Note. Data in Table 2 are from *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2014-2015: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment, and Staffing*, by D. McDonald and M. Shultz, National Catholic Education Association, 2015, http://www.ncea.org/data-information/catholic-school-data

The NCEA conducts a separate analysis on ethnicity for Latino students. As Table 3 illustrates, Latino students comprised 15.3% of students in all Catholic schools in the United States in 2015. Latino school enrollment increased from 2012, from 14.0% to 15.3% in 2015 (NCES, 2013; NCEA, 2015). Of the students enrolled in Catholic schools in the U.S., the largest proportion of Latino students is enrolled at the elementary/middle school level, with 228,307 students enrolled in 2015. Latino students enrolled in either elementary/middle or secondary Catholic schools are likely to live on the West Coast (or "Far West," to use NCEA's term.) The second largest proportion of Latino students come from the Southeastern part of the United States, which also coincides with the largest demographic increases in Latino residents over the past 10 years. In 2010 for example, 41% of the Latino population lived in the West and 36% lived in the South. In the Western part of the United States, Latinos constituted 29% of the general population, far exceeding the 16% national average for Latino residents (Ennis, et al., 2011).

Table 3

Latino Enrollment in Catholic Schools, by Geographic Area, 2015

Area	Elementary/Middle		Secondary		All Schools	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
New England	5,829	8.5	2,496	6.0	8,325	7.6
Mideast	40,711	13.5	16,285	10.7	57,926	12.7
Great Lakes	35,180	10.8	10,786	9.2	42,808	9.7
Plains	19,336	12.8	5,822	11.3	13,708	6.7
Southeast	33,137	14.8	13,500	14.6	43,262	13.7
West/Far West	94,114	32.8	31,947	25.5	130,874	31.7
Total	228,307	16.8	80,837	13.9	296,903	15.3

Note. Data in Table 3 are from *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2014-2015: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment, and Staffing,*, by D. McDonald and M. Shultz, National Catholic Education Association, 2015, http://www.ncea.org/data-information/catholic-school-data

Catholic Secondary Schools and College Readiness

Empirical studies have found that Catholic schools have made solid strides in mitigating gaps in achievement for low-income students of color (Jeynes, 2007; Sander, 1996). What remains less understood however, is the level of college readiness that Latino and underrepresented students attain through their attendance in Catholic high schools in the US. Table 4 shows SAT results by school type. However, Catholic schools are embedded within the larger category of "religious schools" and the data is not disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Table 4

SAT Results by School Type, 2014

School type	Test Sections		
	Critical reading	Mathematics	Writing
Public Schools	492	501	478
Religious Schools	533	537	527
Independent Schools	535	580	542
National averages	497	513	487

Note. Data in Table 1 are published in *2014 College-Bound Seniors Total Group Profile Report, 2014, The College Board,* https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/sat/TotalGroup-2014.pdf The 2014 version of the SAT scored each of the three sections on a scale of 200-800.

The SAT data for 2014 show that students who attend religious schools exceed the test performance of students attending public schools and the national average. However, students who attend independent schools in the United States achieve the highest scores across the three SAT content areas examined. Again, it is difficult to fully assess the specific performance of students attending Catholic high schools because the data for religious schools are aggregated. However, an educated speculation can be made based on these data. There appears to be a greater likelihood of higher test performance on the SAT exam for students attending Catholic schools compared to public schools based on the overall higher performance of students attending religious high schools within their national sample of over 1.5 million students who took the SAT that year.

In addition to the likelihood of higher test scores on select exams like the SAT, students who attend Catholic schools are not only more likely to graduate from high school, but also to attend a four-year college immediately after high school. First, the graduation rate at Catholic high schools in 2011 was 99%. This exceeds the national average by more than 20 percentage points, with the national average in 2011 at 79% (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014).

For Latino and African American students, those who attend Catholic schools are more likely to have higher academic achievement (Neal, 1997) and attend college compared to their public school peers (Evans & Schwab, 1995; Sander & Krautman, 1995). These high transition-to-college rates are detailed in Table 5. More than 85.7% of students graduating from Catholic institutions in 2011 attended a four-year college by the Fall of 2011. These data convey impressive transition-to-college rates for the Catholic high school sector.

Table 5

Percent of US Private Schools with 12th graders, number of graduates, graduation rate, and percent of graduates who attended 4 year colleges, by type of school, 2010-2011

School type	Schools with 12th graders (%)	Number of graduates	Graduation Rate (%)	2010-11 graduates who attended 4-year colleges by Fall 2011(%)
Catholic	19.6	147,577	99.0	85.7
Parochial	6.7	16,763	99.3	85.1
Diocesan	20.0	66,002	98.7	84.5
Private	54.6	64,812	99.3	87.1
Other Religious	33.1	95,324	97.8	62.1
Conservative Christian	53.3	37,770	98.2	60.3
Other affiliated	29.9	28,724	98.0	69.0
Unaffiliated	20.6	28,830	97.1	60.5
Total (all private schools)	27.7	305,842	97.8	64.2

Note. Adapted from "Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results from the 2010-2011 Private School Universe Survey," by S. P. Broughman and N. L. Swaim, 2013, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013316.pdf. Copyright 2013 by NCES. Used with Permission.

However, for the 14% of students not immediately transitioning to a four-year college, questions remain: Who are these students? Where are they transitioning to following their Catholic high school educations? Are those students more likely to be Latino or underrepresented students? These are questions that remain unclear and difficult to answer given the limitations that exist in data not disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Factors Influencing College Choice for Latino Students

Higher education literature on college choice, including college choice theory and transition to college literature, has found that college transition among underrepresented students is influenced by family, siblings, peers, and personal preferences to remain geographically close to families (Cabrera &

La Nasa, 2001). Because many Latino college students are first generation students (the first in their family to attend college), their patterns of enrollment are neither uniform nor based on well-documented prestige or quality. That is, even high achievers are likely to select less competitive or less selective institutions. Many Latino students choose their postsecondary pathways based on a range of factors, such as perceived institutional quality, cost, proximity to family, perceived institutional climate, and knowledge of the institution through a family member (sibling) or peer (Ceja, 2006; Perez & McDonough, 2008). Thus, the college transition process is difficult to assess given the wide range of factors and considerations and overall gap in college awareness within Latino families.

Researchers have found that Latino students also take campus climate considerations more seriously than non-minority peers, and consider college cost more seriously (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Ceja 2006; Freeman, 2005; Perez & McDonough, 2008) due to their debt averse approach to higher education (Cunningham & Santiago, 2008). For Latino students transitioning to Catholic colleges and private universities generally, information passed on through peer networks, church networks, siblings, or intervention programs are some of the key access points of information (Contreras et al., 2011). In addition, the appeal of Catholic colleges stems from the connection that Latino families have with the Catholic Church, whether it be catechism, weekly mass, or interaction with the church for key family events, milestones, or tragedies. This familial tie to Catholicism constitutes an additional factor behind the choices of Latinos electing to transition to Catholic colleges and universities.

Since 2000, few studies have fully explored the college choice process for Latino students in Catholic colleges and universities and their experiences within these institutions (Rafael, Pressley, & Kane, 2003). Rafael et al. (2003), for example, explored the experiences of 19 Latino undergraduate students at the University of Notre Dame in the early 2000s. Student participants reported a positive experience with the campus, both personally and academically. However, a handful of participants struggled with inclusion within the University. In addition, most of the study participants had a very difficult time leaving family members and their community, experiencing a sense of cultural isolation at Notre Dame. Spirituality, a common thread across all of the students in the sample, therefore, became a very important coping mechanism for the Latino students and helps to shed light on students' initial choice to attend the institution. That is, even without a critical mass of

Latino students within the university setting, the common thread of religion and spirituality helped to foster a sense of belonging on the campus.

Latino students choosing Catholic colleges and universities. Catholic colleges and universities historically have played a distinct role in providing undergraduate and graduate degrees in a climate where faith is central to institutional objectives. Catholic colleges are known for providing students with small instructor to student ratios, space for identity exploration and development, and space for spiritual development (Rafael et al., 2013). Few researchers have explored the distinct impact of Catholic universities on Latino students and their individual experiences (Rafael et al., 2013) and outcomes.

Since 1965, however, there has been a decline in the number of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Table 6 shows there were 305 Catholic colleges and universities in 1965, compared to 225 in 2014 (CARA, 2015). In addition, while the Latino population is concentrated largely in the West, the majority of Catholic postsecondary institutions are located in the Midwest and Eastern part of the US. Despite this decline in the number of Catholic colleges and universities, these institutions continue to span the various institutional types within the postsecondary sector.

Table 6

Number of Catholic Colleges and Universities, 1965-2014

	Year										
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014
Catholic colleges and universities	305	279	245	235	243	228	231	230	229	234	225

Note. Adapted from "Frequently Requested Church Statistics," by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). Retrieved from http://cara.georgetown.edu/caraservices/requestedchurchstats.html.

While a notable decline in the number of Catholic colleges and universities has occurred, the number of students enrolled has increased during this same time frame. Enrollments have essentially doubled in size, from 409,471 in 1965 to 787,574 in 2014 (CARA, 2015). Because Latino students prefer to attend college closer to family and their home (Contreras et al., 2011), many Latinos transitioning to college may not see Catholic universities as an optimal choice, which may help to explain the limited Latino student diversity across Catholic postsecondary institutions.

Given the unique mission of Catholic universities, their smaller admitted cohorts, and smaller class sizes that afford students greater access to university faculty, it is no surprise then, to find eight universities listed in the top 50 universities serving Latino students in 2015. Table 7 details the admissions rate, retention rate, graduation rate and cost of the universities that made it into the top 50 list of those that "best" serve Latino students.

Table 7
Catholic Universities Ranked in the Top 50 Colleges for Hispanic Students, 2015

Institution	Rank	% Latino Students	6-year Graduation Rate (%)	Retention Rate (%)	Admissions Rate (%)	Tuition & Fees
St. Edwards University	5	33	69	79	79	$36,550
University of St. Thomas	12	31	48	79	77	$29,440
St. Mary's University	15	54	57	77	58	$25,126
Mount St. Mary's College	22	51	57	81	74	$34,826
College of Mt. Saint Vincent	29	34	57	71	73	$30,290
Saint Peter's University	34	25	52	75	54	$33,232
St. Thomas University	43	37	32	70	46	$27,150
Our Lady of the Lake University	50	55	27	60	66	$24,596

Note. Adapted from BestColleges.com, 2015. http://www.bestcolleges.com/features/top-50-colleges-for-hispanic-students/

The word "best" is the term utilized by this organization, however, after looking at the graduation rate, with the highest graduation rate for their Latino students at 69%, the use of the term "best" is largely inappropriate. What these data tell us is that even among institutions categorized as Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs)–meaning that more than 25% of their enrolled students are Latino–those serving the highest proportion of Latino students also had the lowest graduation rates. For example, at Our Lady of the Lake University, 55% of students enrolled were Latino. However, only 27% of their Latino students graduated within a six-year time frame.

This initial glimpse of institutions selected by BestColleges.com, an independent data source on colleges and universities throughout the US, shows the challenges that HSI Catholic colleges and universities experience in enrolling, retaining, and graduating its Latino students. Critical mass and ac-

cess for Latino students should in fact be celebrated, but college completion and high academic performance in college must also be part of the discussion when assessing the impact of colleges serving high concentrations of Latino students (Contreras & Contreras, 2015).

College Completion of Latino Students

Research on Latino college completion has found that this process is a longitudinal one, where it is important to understand progress of Latino students throughout the P-20 pipeline, and contextualize the systemic and historical challenges that have impeded generational progress for Mexican Americans and Latinos in the United States (Contreras, et. al., 2011; Gándara, 1994; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Telles & Ortiz, 2009). Because Latino students attend low resource K–12 schools with less qualified teachers, and more limited opportunities to learn than schools in more affluent districts, Latino students are more likely to be underprepared for the transition to college (Contreras, 2011). Moreover, since Latinos are more likely to attend community colleges and less selective institutions generally, their degree completion rates are lower than their peers (Contreras et al., 2011). Students who attend highly selective institutions are more likely to complete college at faster rates than those attending open access institutions (Carnevale & Rose, 2003). This may help to explain the overall low college completion rates among Latino students in the United States, as the majority of Latinos are attending open access institutions.

The higher education literature has also clearly conveyed the higher college completion rates of students generally at liberal arts four year colleges and private universities due to the lower class sizes, greater student contact between faculty and staff, likelihood of living on campus all four years, and academic supports that well resourced private institutions afford their student to help facilitate college completion (DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor, & Tran, 2011). In addition to institutional resources, there are also several resources for volunteerism and civic engagement that appear to be intertwined with institutional missions. As a result, Latino students in these contexts are more likely to engage in volunteer and leadership activities in private universities, which has shown a positive impact on academic outcomes and college completion (Fajardo, Lott & Contreras, 2014).

By institutional sector, college completion also varies. In a study conducted by researchers at the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA

(DeAngelo et al., 2011), degree attainment rates were found to be higher at private institutions. The four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates were highest at private universities (Table 8). Catholic colleges and universities had fairly high college completion rates, second only to private universities. Because the degree attainment rates for students are higher at Catholic institutions than public and other university types, these institutions remain a viable option for raising Latino college completion rates.

Table 8

Degree Attainment Rates by Institutional Type, 2004 Entering Freshmen

	Weighted Percent Completing Bachelor's Degree Within		
Institutional Type	4 Years	5 Years	6 Years
Public University	37.1	59.8	65.6
Private University	64.0	75.9	78.2
Public 4-Year College	23.5	43.1	49.5
Nonsectarian 4-Year College	48.7	59.3	61.8
Catholic 4-Year College	54.1	64.0	66.0
Other Religious 4-Year College	47.8	56.3	57.9

Note. Reprinted from *Completing College: Assessing Graduation Rates at Four-year Institutions*, by L. DeAngelo, R. Franke, S. Hurtado, J. H. Pryor & S. Tran, 2011, Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA. Copyright 2011 by the Regents of the University of California. Used with permission.

Prior analyses on Catholic colleges and universities, has relied on data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) housed at the Higher Education Research Institute, which may not be fully comprehensive of all 225 Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States. What is important to note in the CIRP data presented in Table 9 (DeAngelo et al., 2011) is the lower four-year college completion rates for Latinos, African American and American Indian students within this sector compared to their White, Asian American and Multiracial peers. While these rates are higher than other religious colleges (44.2% of Latinos graduate within 6 years) and public four-year colleges (which are likely to be less selective), the six-year college attainment rate at Catholic colleges and universities are lower than Latinos at private universities, public universities, and non-sectarian

colleges. Thus, there is room for strategic improvement within Catholic universities to raise their completion rates for Latino and underrepresented undergraduate students.

Table 9
Six-Year Degree Attainment Rates (in percentages) by Race/Ethnicity and Institutional Type, using 2004 CIRP data

	Institutional Type					
Racial/Ethnic Group	Public University	Private University	Public 4-Year College	Nonsectarian 4-Year College	Catholic 4-Year College	Other Religious 4-Year College
African American	46.7	67.9	36.2	40.0	44.2	38.3
American Indian	45.1	79.0	26.9	46.2	37.9	38.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	76.4	85.2	54.8	73.4	72.6	55.7
Latina/o	57.7	70.3	38.6	60.0	53.9	44.2
White	66.9	79.4	55.3	65.2	69.4	60.4
Multi-racial	60.8	73.2	43.6	55.8	59.2	51.1
Other	63.1	73.2	48.6	62.9	58.4	56.7

Note. Reprinted from *Completing College: Assessing Graduation Rates at Four-year Institutions*, by L. DeAngelo, R. Franke, S. Hurtado, J. H. Pryor & S. Tran, 2011, Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA. Copyright 2011 by the Regents of the University of California. Used with permission.

Table 10

Bachelor's Degree Attainment, by Time to Completion and Sector, Fall 2006 cohort, (percent)

	Four Years			Five Years			Six Years		
	At Original Institution	At Different Institution	Total	At Original Institution	At Different Institution	Total	At Original Institution	At Different Institution	Total
A. All Entering Students									
Public, Four-Year (N=1,497,257)	34.1	4.9	**39.0**	46.0	8.7	**54.7**	49.4	10.9	**60.3**
For-Profit (N=107,109)	26.5	2.3	**28.8**	29.3	3.8	**33.1**	30.3	4.9	**35.2**
Private, Four-Year (N=615,162)	48.4	5.4	**53.8**	55.1	9.0	**64.8**	56.9	11.8	**68.7**
Catholic (N=133,179)	48.4	5.8	**54.2**	55.0	10.5	**65.5**	56.8	13.0	**69.8**
B. First-Year, Full-Time									
Public, Four-Year (N=742,571)	32.2	4.9	**37.1**	49.0	7.5	**56.5**	53.4	9.4	**62.8**
For-Profit (N=39,272)	27.2	1.5	**28.7**	30.3	2.6	**32.9**	31.1	3.6	**34.7**
Private, Four-Year (N=346,922)	52.1	4.6	**56.7**	60.4	8.8	**69.2**	62.4	10.6	**73.0**
Catholic (N=74,179)	52.6	5.2	**57.8**	61.0	9.7	**70.7**	62.9	11.6	**74.5**
C. First-Year, Part-Time									
Public, Four-Year (N=164,103)	9.0	2.9	**11.9**	13.0	10.1	**23.1**	15.6	16.0	**31.6**
For-Profit (N=9,681)	11.2	1.6	**12.8**	14.3	2.9	**17.2**	15.4	4.0	**19.4**
Private, Four-Year (N=43,437)	15.5	3.8	**19.3**	19.1	14.7	**33.8**	20.9	22.3	**43.2**
Catholic (N=11,889)	15.2	2.7	**17.9**	19.0	16.4		20.8	27.4	**48.2**
D. Transfer-In, Full-Time									
Public, Four-Year (N=457, 480)	32.9	2.8	**35.7**	35.4	4.4	**39.8**	36.3	5.6	**41.9**
For-Profit (N= 45,604)	26.5	2.3	**28.8**	29.3	3.8	**33.1**	30.3	4.9	**35.2**
Private, Four-Year (N=178,371)	55.1	6.8	**61.9**	60.1	9.7	**69.8**	61.5	11.1	**72.6**
Catholic (N=35,381)	56.7	7.1	**63.8**	61.5	9.9	**71.4**	62.9	11.3	**74.2**

Note. Reprinted from *Bachelor's Degree Attainment: Catholic Universities Lead the Way*, by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, 2013. Copyright 2013, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities. Used with permission.

In order to compare the overall attainment rates by institutional type, Catholic colleges have the highest degree completion rates for entering students in the Fall 2006 cohort. These data are limited however, as it does

not provide a portrait of the student degree outcomes disaggregated by race/ethnicity. Table 10 provides a snapshot of the four-year, five-year, and six year completion rates by institutional type (aggregated) and type of student. Nor are Catholic institutions separated by Carnegie classification or institutional size.

Method

The literature reviewed in the previous sections provides some insight into Latino students' transitions, experiences, and outcomes in higher education. To better understand Latino student outcomes within Catholic universities, it is necessary to do a more detailed analysis by sector, and of select institutions within the larger sample of Catholic postsecondary institutions. This quantitative study of Latino students in Catholic higher education begins a necessary process of unpacking available data in order to better understand the role of Catholic universities in the enrollment and completion rates of these students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this analysis:

1. What role do Catholic Universities play in providing Latino students with access to the postsecondary sector?
    a. What are Latino enrollment patterns?
2. What are the completion rates for Latino students compared to their peers in Catholic colleges and universities?
3. What are the implications of these data for understanding the opportunities that exist for Catholic colleges and universities to provide targeted outreach and access for larger percentages of Latino students, particularly as they comprise greater proportions of K–12 enrollments?

Analysis

This exploratory study of Latino students' enrollment and completion at Catholic postsecondary institutions relies upon secondary data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) from the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES). Original analysis of Catholic Col-

lege and Universities are conducted using IPEDS data on individual institutions to answer the research questions, as data sets on Catholic colleges and universities are not readily available. These data are often embedded within the larger NCES data set on private institutions.

To answer the research questions outlined above, IPEDS data were utilized to build a data set for Catholic colleges and universities that are classified as research/doctoral granting institutions in the United States. A subset of 20 doctoral granting institutions (according to their Carnegie classification) was selected for this analysis. These 20 institutions were selected largely because of their capacity to compare the outcomes to national rates, and the public knowledge of these institutions in the postsecondary sector. However, one university, Saint John's University in New York did not have a complete IPEDs data profile to include in the analysis. Thus, 19 doctoral granting institutions were examined for this exploratory study. What is important to note here is the limitation in IPEDs data on students by race/ethnicity. As a result, 2007 data are used for this analysis.

Findings

Table 11 shows the enrollment rates in select doctoral granting Catholic institutions by race/ethnicity in 2007. The data show relatively small percentages of Latino enrollment, particularly for the larger institutions like Georgetown where Latinos constitute a mere 5.4%, Notre Dame (9.3%), University of Dayton (1.9%), Marquette University (5.4%), Boston College (7.8%) and Loyola University (9.5%). In contrast, in 2002, Latino students were approximately 19% of all K–12 students in US schools, and in 2014 were over 25% of all students enrolled in public schools (NCES, 2015) and over 15% of those enrolled in Catholic high schools. These data show a possibility for increasing campus diversity by recruiting more Latino high achieving secondary school students.

Table 11

Enrollment Rates in Select Doctoral Granting Catholic Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity (Fall 2007)

Institution	Total Enrollment	% Black non-Hispanic	% American Indian or Alaska Native	% Asian or Pacific Islander	% Latino	% White non-Hispanic	% Race/ ethnicity unknown
Barry University	474	28.1	0.4	1.9	30.0	24.7	7.6
Boston College	2324	5.9	0.3	11.3	7.8	70.5	2.2
Catholic University of America	866	2.4	0.1	3.3	5.3	75.4	12.0
DePaul University	2522	6.1	0.6	8.6	11.5	62.6	9.6
Duquesne University	1361	3.2	0.1	1.7	1.1	88.5	4.0
Fordham University	1784	4.8	0.4	7.5	12.6	55.0	17.5
Georgetown University	1582	6.6	0.1	11.1	5.4	68.6	3.4
Immaculata University	293	10.9	1.0	1.0	4.1	76.1	6.8
Loyola University Chicago	2035	4.2	0.4	12.7	9.5	65.9	6.9
Marquette University	1820	4.9	0.3	4.3	5.4	82.9	0.5
Saint Louis University-Main Campus	1611	6.2	0.2	7.0	3.7	75.8	4.6
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota	422	4.0	0.9	2.1	3.6	80.3	8.3
Saint Thomas University	226	23.5	0.0	1.8	55.8	5.3	4.9
Seton Hall University	1260	12.6	0.2	6.0	10.8	57.4	12.2
Spalding University	190	32.1	1.1	0.0	3.2	43.7	20.0
University of Dayton	1763	4.1	0.2	1.2	1.9	87.9	4.0
University of Notre Dame	1991	4.6	0.7	7.0	9.3	75.5	0.0
University of San Diego	1094	2.1	1.6	10.8	14.4	60.1	9.1
University of San Francisco	1053	4.9	0.9	23.2	14.6	38.6	11.7

Note. Data in Table 11 are from the 2015 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data set, U.S. Department of Education, 2015, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/

For highly selective institutions like Georgetown University and the University of Notre Dame, for example, we see very high four-year degree rates. The four-year graduation rate for Latino students at Georgetown was 91.2% (n=1066) and 91.3% at Notre Dame (n=1636). These are also the two most selective institutions that are equally labeled by their Carnegie classification as "very high research activity" doctoral granting institutions.

And for those students that do not complete their degrees in four years at the 19 doctoral institutions examined, the data reflects that many complete by the 6-year time frame. However, for Latino students, the four-year rates vary across Catholic doctoral granting institutions. The total sample for Latinos also varies widely, so the percentages should be read with caution. For example, Marquette University has a four-year completion rate of 40.8% for its Latino students, and a six-year degree completion rate of 70.4%. However the total number of Latinos in the cohort selected was 71 students. For most of these institutions the sample size for Latinos was well under 200 students.

It is also important to note that the four-year degree rates for Latino students attending Catholic institutions exceeds the national average four-year completion rates of doctoral granting institutions in the public university sector for this same cohort (see Table 12). The Latino four-year graduation rates between 2000 and 2002 (across three years) averaged 20%, and the six-year degree completion rate was 39%. This comparison however, is a difficult one to make, as the number of public institutions is vast and varies in selectivity and resources.

Thus, this analysis does not focus on comparing the 19 Catholic Universities selected for this exploratory study, rather the focus is on better understanding the completion rates for Latino students in particular, across 19 of the more selective Catholic Universities in the nation. It is widely understood that Catholic colleges across the United States vary greatly in size, resources and infrastructure. Thus, to compare qualitatively different institutions is not the goal of this analysis. Table 12 shows the total completions within four years at doctoral institutions in 2007, and Table 13 presents the six-year completion rates (the most complete data set within IPEDS across ethnic categories).

Table 12

Total Completions within 4 Years, Doctoral Institutions, 2007 (2001 Cohort, by percent)

Institution	% Black non-Hispanic	% American Indian or Alaska Native	% Asian or Pacific Islander	% Latino	% White non-Hispanic	% Race/ ethnicity unknown	Total %
Barry University	18.6	-	12.5	24.6	27.7	12.8	23.4
Boston College	78	100	84.6	82.6	90	85.2	88.2
Catholic University of America	62.5	-	30	44.4	69.4	53.4	66.4
DePaul University	27.3	25	44.9	32.5	46.9	37.8	42.4
Duquesne University	35	50	50	36.8	59.4	53.8	57.8
Fordham University	74.4	0	72.2	61	78.9	75.3	75.7
Georgetown University	81.5	100	91.2	90.2	91.2	88.9	90.4
Immaculata University	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loyola University Chicago	23	0	46.7	29.5	53	47.3	47.3
Marquette University	27.6	0	53.4	40.8	59.7	-	57.1
Saint Louis University-Main Campus	28.6	66.7	72.7	58.8	64.7	58.5	62.2
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota	16.7	-	20	60	50.7	38.1	48.6
Saint Thomas University	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Seton Hall University	28.7	100	41.5	37.1	47.2	36	41.9
Spalding University	0	-	66.7	-	18.6	24	19.5
University of Dayton	35.2	33.3	52.6	40.9	57.9	46.7	56.6
University of Notre Dame	81.7	72.7	87.6	83	91.3	-	89.6
University of San Diego	28.6	66.7	67.5	50.9	67.4	66.7	63.3
University of San Francisco	42.9	71.4	53.4	50.5	47.3	53.4	48.9

Note. Data in Table 12 are from the 2015 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data set. U.S. Department of Education, 2015, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/

Table 13

Total Completions within 6 Years, Doctoral Institutions, 2007 (2001 Cohort, by percent)

Institution	% Black non-Hispanic	% American Indian or Alaska Native	% Asian or Pacific Islander	% Latino	% White non-Hispanic	% Race/ ethnicity unknown	Total %
Barry University	37.1	0	50.0	39.7	41.2	21.3	39.0
Boston College	82.9	100.0	88.3	84.3	92.9	88.0	91.2
Catholic University of America	62.5	0	50	55.6	76.6	65.5	74.6
DePaul University	47.9	25.0	66.8	57.0	64.7	57.1	62.0
Duquesne University	60.0	50.0	66.7	57.9	73.5	64.1	72.3
Fordham University	82.1	0	80.4	68.8	82.1	77.0	79.6
Georgetown University	84.8	100.0	94.9	91.5	94.3	93.3	93.4
Immaculata University	66.7	0	100.0	25.0	68.4	62.5	67.2
Loyola University Chicago	44.0	0	63.6	56.1	69.3	63.6	65.0
Marquette University	46.1	66.7	71.2	70.4	76.8	0	75.0
Saint Louis University-Main Campus	51.9	66.7	83.1	67.6	76.7	68.3	74.5
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota	33.3	0	60.0	80.0	55.0	38.1	53.4
Saint Thomas University	35.8	0	100	29.7	35.3	20.0	34.3
Seton Hall University	49.6	100	57.6	51.5	61.8	48.9	56.9
Spalding University	9.1	0	66.7	0	22	28	23.9
University of Dayton	61.1	66.7	68.4	63.6	77.3	73.3	76.3
University of Notre Dame	95.0	72.7	95.5	91.2	96.5	0	95.5
University of San Diego	42.9	83.3	77.1	66.3	76.4	76.2	73.8
University of San Francisco	65.7	71.4	73.1	66.0	61.9	65.5	65.1

Note. Data in Table 12 are from the 2015 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data set. U.S. Department of Education, 2015, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/

Implications

The implications of this research span the transition to college years. First it appears that Catholic high schools have a solid track record of not only graduating its Latino students, but also transitioning these students on to college. It is unclear, however, from the data examined and available, the proportion of Latino students transitioning immediately to four-year colleges versus the two-year college sector. There is a 14% gap in the transition to four-year colleges from the 99% graduation rate of Catholic high schools. What is unclear from the data is the proportion of Latinos that fall into the 14% of Catholic high school graduates not transitioning to college, or transitioning to community college.

The data also show the noteworthy differences that exist across doctoral granting Catholic institutions, especially with respect to Latino enrollment. There is great variation across institutions in the percentages and number of Latino students within these Catholic colleges and universities. However, what is clear is that the proportion of Latino students attending Catholic colleges and universities falls well below the percent of Latino students enrolled in Catholic high schools and the percentage of Latinos in K–12 public schools. The students from Catholic high schools in particular that possess high graduation rates and high transition to college rates to four-year institutions represents an opportunity for Catholic colleges and universities to raise the level of Latino student enrollment and underrepresented student diversity.

The data on Latino students in Catholic colleges and universities also show promising degree completion rates that far exceed national averages for public postsecondary institutions. While these degree completion rates also require improvement for Latino students (and other under-represented minority students), Catholic colleges and universities are performing notably better than public universities in college completion. Yet, very little is known about the levels of debt that exists among these graduates. For example, at Catholic University of America, where Pope Francis spoke during his first visit to the United States, "the school's poorest students pay over $31,000 a year in tuition, even after discounts from scholarships—more than any other research university in the nation. Students also graduate with a significant amount of debt: $26,000" (Waldman, 2015, p.1).

Thus, college completion is complex issue, particularly for Latinos, who are more likely to be low-income and first generation college students (Contreras, et. al., 2011).

A great deal of work still remains to fully understand why Latino students still trail far behind their White counterparts in terms of college completion across all of the institutions examined. This is an area for ongoing exploration, because it remains unclear, without a qualitative component to this study, the factors that lead to these relatively high four- and six-year college completion rates for the institutions with larger numbers of Latino students, and the differences that exist across ethnic groups within these institutions. Case studies of the larger Latino serving Catholic institutions would greatly inform the higher education literature and perhaps serve as a model for conversations within this sector on the potential that exists for creating model Hispanic Serving Institutions.

Recommendations

This analysis of Latino students in Catholic institutions has led to some key implications and recommendations. One of the first and obvious findings is the difficulty in understanding the outcomes of Catholic postsecondary institutions. While select institutional think tanks like CARA at Georgetown commission studies on Catholic postsecondary institutions, there does not appear to be a clear infrastructure that exists for data tracking, longitudinal analysis, and real time snapshots of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. As evident in the multitude of data sources utilized for this exploratory analysis, an accurate portrait of Catholic Postsecondary institutions is limited by the routine aggregation of data under "Private Schools." The following recommendations are intended to start a conversation that specifically focuses on the role of Catholic institutions in increasing Latino college completion, and highlights elements of infrastructure necessary to actualize this goal, if in fact it is a priority within this sector.

1. Establish a National Data Center on Catholic Colleges and Universities

A national data center would house real time institutional and student data and conduct trend analysis by race and ethnicity (among a host of variables) on the performance of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. The subsample of 19 institutions explored for this study shows variability in outcomes when race and ethnicity are examined. This center would provide an invaluable function for Catholic colleges in the nation by enabling institutions and researchers to analyze and compare

student outcomes across the postsecondary sector and by institutional type. Aggregate data on Catholic universities (when available) inaccurately pools all institutional data across higher education sectors.

2. Collaborate on Qualitative and Quantitative Research on Latino Students in Catholic Postsecondary Institutions

Collaborative research efforts that are qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods in their design, are greatly needed across the Catholic postsecondary sector. While The Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA) exists at Georgetown, and has played a leading role in producing reports related to Catholic higher education, few reports and research efforts directly address the differences that exist by race/ethnicity, class, region, and generational status in higher education outcomes. Race/Ethnicity plays a distinct role in the navigational process of many underrepresented students. And given the increasing base of diverse K–12 students, and the majority of national student growth that is Latino, it is important to assess the experiences and outcomes of these diverse student groups. There is room for greater collaboration to build upon the good work that has begun through CARA.

3. Examine College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity

Data at the high school level are needed to assess the degree to which Latino students are performing well on a number of academic indicators. Because Catholic high schools do not fully operate under federal or national standard policy paradigms (such as the new Common Core State Standards) and they possess autonomy to adopt their own standards (US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2014), it is unclear how Latino students are able to compete with other high achieving students across the nation. Assessing progress in Advanced Placement (AP) classes, honors curriculum, gifted and talented education (GATE) programs, and high school math courses is particularly important to better understand the level of preparedness for college that exists and the work that can be done earlier within Catholic middle and high schools.

4. Increase Catholic Postsecondary Latino Enrollment by Partnering with Catholic High Schools in the United States

Catholic high schools represent natural partnerships for Catholic universities to initiate seamless pathway programs where first generation, low income, and students from diverse backgrounds would have early exposure to Catholic postsecondary institutions. Such programs and collaborative efforts have been highly successful in the public postsecondary sectors and may help Catholic universities to also create models for seamless exposure and transition into some of the nation's most selective Catholic universities. This would serve to provide greater access to first generation Latino students into the Catholic postsecondary sector while providing these institutions with greater student diversity that better reflects the national demographic profile of students and residents.

5. Disaggregate Catholic School and University Data from the Broader Private School Category/Classification

Catholic school data and Catholic university data is often aggregated and embedded in the broader Private school enrollment data. Thus, Catholic university data is a subset of this larger group that includes other religious institutions. This makes it difficult to gain an accurate portrait of Catholic universities and their distinct outcomes for students.

6. Conduct Analysis of Catholic Institutions through Existing Data Sets such as CIRP and High School and Beyond

There is a need for greater analysis of Catholic institutions by two-year, four-year characteristics as well as by Carnegie classification using existing national data sources. Since many Catholic universities have high four-year completion rates, greater analyses is needed to help to explain how catholic institutions achieve this success among its Latino students. These databases may be useful tools for understanding the institutional and social experiences, as well as academic outcomes, of Latino students.

7. Encourage Analysis by Race/Ethnicity within Catholic Colleges and Universities

Most of the data that exist on Catholic colleges and universities with respect to their outcomes, aggregates student data. This presents a chal-

lenge for researchers when we attempt to unpack the specific role Catholic Universities play in educating Latinos and students from historically underrepresented communities in general.

8. Utilize critical analysis specifically on Latino students to establish strategies to raise college success and completion rates.

The snapshot data for 2015 on the "best" colleges serving Latino students suggests that Catholic institutions with high concentrations of Latinos are struggling with the very issues that many HSIs encounter: academic challenges, persistence issues associated with adapting to campus climate, and college completion (Contreras & Contreras, 2015).

9. Explore the HSI status of high schools and Catholic college and universities and assess their Latino student outcomes

Because Latino enrollment in Catholic high schools and universities is a population that is increasing due to the unprecedented demographic growth the United States due to Latino birth rates, migration and immigration, understanding how high schools and colleges with a large (and growing) critical mass of Latino students (greater than 25%) is important if both K–12 and postsecondary sectors seek to remain attractive options to the Latino community.

Conclusion

The college transition data for Latino students in Catholic high schools appears to be very promising, with overall high secondary graduation rates and high transition to college rates. In addition, private institutions generally appear to be preparing academically successful and competitive college candidates, with higher than average SAT scores and performance and almost perfect high school graduation rates (99%). Partnerships between the Catholic high school sector and Catholic colleges and universities would serve both sectors well, as students will be able to continue their pathway of academic success that began in high school. Thus, seamless pathway partnerships would greatly benefit Catholic universities as they work to increase their overall diversity profiles.

At the postsecondary level, a concerted effort to enroll and ensure academic success is necessary within the doctoral granting Catholic university sector. Enrollment rates of Latino students to the most selective (Research I) Catholic universities, for example, appears to be an area for greater investment and attention, given the growing number of college eligible and academically competitive Latino students in high schools today. In addition, because there is great variability in enrollment across Catholic doctoral granting institutions examined, it is no surprise that the college completion rates of Latino students remain a challenge for this sector. Across the institutions examined, Latino students possessed lower four- and six-year college completion rates, when they were compared to their White and Asian American peers from the same cohort. This finding suggests that steps are necessary to ensure greater college success and completion for Latino and underrepresented students.

Changes in how Catholic college and university data are collected and housed would also greatly improve the overall ability of researchers and institutions to unpack the specific outcomes of Catholic colleges in the nation. There are numerous opportunities that exist within this postsecondary sector due to the autonomy Catholic universities possess. Thus, investing in a data collection system across Catholic postsecondary institutions would enable this sector to conduct real-time analysis of its institutional and individual student outcomes.

Finally, the findings suggest that even in environments that possess lower faculty to student ratios, a climate where spirituality is celebrated, and a proven track record of serving students better than public institutions, Latino students remain a population that no institutional type or sector has yet begun to serve well to optimize academic outcomes. Perhaps Catholic colleges and universities may lead the way in creating better Latino serving institutions that would serve as models for the nation. However, this will require that Catholic schools and universities work in collaboration to produce consistent data on Latino student enrollment and graduation, which can be more easily analyzed and compared over the years.

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