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# Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the 21st Century: Overview, Challenges, and Opportunities

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**Abstract:** This research study reports the responses of presidents, chancellors, and CEOs of Hispanic-serving institutions who responded to a survey on issues/challenges/problems facing their institutions. The responses are categorized into five general topics: funding, technology, faculty, growth and diversity, and student academic preparation, retention, and graduation. The respondents were equally divided on whether the issues/challenges/problems they identified are directly related to the fact that their institutions are Hispanic-serving institutions.

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**Resumen:** Este estudio de investigación reporta las respuestas de presidentes, rectores y ejecutivos oficiales principales de Instituciones de Servicio a Hispanos que respondieron a una encuesta en la que identificaron problemas, asuntos y retos en sus instituciones. Las respuestas se pueden categorizar en cinco temas: fondos, tecnología, Profesorado, crecimiento y diversidad, preparación académica, retención y graduación de estudiantes. Los participantes están divididos al identificar la relación existente o no entre los asuntos, problemas, y retos y el hecho de que sus instituciones son de servicio para Hispanos.

**Keywords:** Hispanic-serving institutions; Hispanic demographics

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**The Hispanic population,** as of 2000 the largest minority group in the United States, has made significant progress since 1990 in such areas as education, political involvement, and socioeconomic status (U.S. Bureau of the

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Census, 2000; Carnavale, 1999). Recent studies show a direct relationship between educational achievement of Hispanic individuals and earnings and thus their contribution to economic development (Carnavale, 1999).

Although the Hispanic population in the United States was previously known as a "regional" minority, the census of 2000 shows that Hispanic individuals now live throughout the country, with only a few counties in some northern and southern states having no Hispanic population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002).

During the past two decades, a cluster of institutions of higher education with a large number or percentage of Hispanic students has come to be recognized as the primary provider of higher education to the growing Hispanic population in the country. These Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) face challenges at the beginning of the 21st century, yet they have opportunities to increase and enhance their service to Hispanic communities.

### **Hispanic Population—Largest Minority Group**

The Hispanic population in the United States increased from 22,354,059 in 1990 to 35,305,818 in 2000—a 57.93% increase—making them the largest minority group. In the same period, the total U.S. population increased from 248.7 million in 1990 to 281.4 million in 2000, a 13.15% increase (see Table 1) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001).

In 2000, the Hispanic population represented 12.5% of the total U.S. population. In other words, 1 out of every 8 persons in the country is Hispanic (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

As shown in Table 1, Hispanic individuals of Mexican descent increased from 13,495,938 in 1990 to 20,640,711 in 2000, an increase of 52.94%. Puerto Ricans increased by 24.87%, from 2,727,754 in 1990 to 3,406,711 in 2000. Cubans increased from 1,043,435 in 1990 to 1,241,685 in 2000, an increase of 18.94%. It is interesting that the "Other" Hispanic population almost doubled, from 5,086,435 in 1990 to 10,017,244 in 2000; this category represents Hispanic individuals from Central America, South America, and other parts of the world.

As shown in Table 2, the Hispanic population is concentrated in five states; almost 70% live in California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois. Almost one third of all Hispanic individuals live in California, whereas almost one fifth live in Texas. Almost one half of all Hispanic individuals live in these two states.

Almost three quarters (74.89%) of all Hispanic individuals live in 7 states and nearly 8 out of 10 are concentrated in 10 states. Although the Hispanic population is indeed concentrated in 10 states, there are Hispanic individuals in almost every county in the United States. Very few counties in some northern and southern states have no Hispanic population.

**Table 1**  
U.S. Hispanic Population, 1990 and 2000—Increase

	1990	2000	Percent Increase
Grand total U.S. population	248,709,873	281,421,906	13.15
Total Hispanic population	22,354,059	35,305,818	57.93
Mexican	13,495,938	20,640,711	52.94
Puerto Rican	2,727,754	3,406,711	24.87
Cuban	1,043,435	1,241,685	18.94
Other <sup>a</sup>	5,086,435	10,017,244	96.96

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001.

a. This category represents Hispanic individuals from Central America, South America, and other parts of the world.

**Table 2**  
U.S. Hispanic Population—10 Largest States, 2000

State	Hispanic Population	Percent of Total Hispanic Population
California	10,966,556	31.06
Texas	6,669,666	18.89
New York	2,867,583	8.12
Florida	2,682,715	7.59
Illinois	1,530,262	3.47
Arizona	1,033,822	2.92
New Jersey	1,004,011	2.84
New Mexico	700,289	1.98
Colorado	577,516	1.64
Massachusetts	377,016	1.07

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001.

NOTE: Total U.S. Hispanic population in 2000 was 35,305,818.

As shown in Table 3, of the total Hispanic population in the United States in 2000, those of Mexican background represented the largest subgroup: 20,640,711, or 58.46% of all Hispanic individuals. The second largest group of Hispanic individuals, with a total of 10,017,244, were classified as Other, that is Hispanic individuals from Central America, South America, and other parts of the world; 1 of every 3 of all Hispanic individuals falls into the Other category. Puerto Ricans, with a total of 3,406,178 in 2000, represented 9.65% of the total, whereas the 1,241,685 Cubans represented 3.52%.

### Hispanic Educational Achievement and Economic Opportunity

Although Hispanic individuals have made some progress in educational achievement, they continue to trail behind the total population. For example,

**Table 3**  
Hispanic Subgroup Populations in 1990 and 2000 (in percentages)

<i>Subgroup</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>
Mexican	60.37	58.46
Puerto Rican	12.20	9.65
Cuban	4.67	3.52
Other <sup>a</sup>	22.75	28.37

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001.

NOTE: Total Hispanic population as percentage of total U.S. population in 1990 and 2000 were 9% and 12.5%, respectively.

a. This category represents Hispanic individuals from Central America, South America, and other parts of the world.

in 2000, the gap in high school graduation rates between White and Hispanic students aged 18 to 24 years was almost 23 percentage points: 59.6% for Hispanic students compared to 82.4% for White students (Harvey, 2002, p. 47-48).

In 2000, the college enrollment rate for 18- to 24-year-old Whites was 43.3% compared to 36.5% for Hispanic students, a gap of 6.8 percentage points. Thus, a smaller percentage of those Hispanic students who did graduate from high school pursued further studies (Harvey, 2002, p. 47-48).

During the period between 1990 and 1999, the number of Hispanic students enrolled in all institutions of higher education increased by almost 70% from 782,000 in 1990 to 1,317,000 in 1999. Of the total Hispanic students enrolled in institutions of higher education in 1999, more than half (55.8%) were enrolled in community colleges (Harvey, 2002, p. 55).

Although Hispanic students represented 8.9% of all the students enrolled in institutions of higher education in 1999 (Harvey, 2002, p. 55), they earned 8.7% of the associate degrees and only 5.8% of the bachelor's degrees (Harvey, 2002, p. 61), 4% of master's degrees (Harvey, 2002, p. 62), and 4.9% of first professional degrees awarded that year (Harvey, 2002, p. 63).

Hispanic individuals earned 1,151 of the 41,060 doctoral degrees awarded in 1999, or 2.8% of all doctoral degrees (Harvey, 2002, p. 75). If one considers only those doctoral degrees awarded to U.S. citizens in 1999 (27,636), the doctoral degrees earned by Hispanic graduates is 4.16% (Harvey, 2002, p. 75).

Only 10.6% of Hispanic individuals 25 years old or older had completed 4 years of college in 1999, compared to 25.6% for all of this age group (Harvey, 2002, p. 54).

Thus, the underrepresentation of Hispanic students on campus and the low percentage that have earned degrees correlates with their underrepresentation in the good, high-paying jobs. As a consequence, the underrepresentation of Hispanic students on campus also correlates with lower earn-

ings. On average, non-Hispanic White men earn U.S.\$17,000 more a year than Hispanic men, and non-Hispanic White women earn U.S.\$6,700 a year more than Hispanic women (Carnavale, 1999).

### **Projections: Hispanic High School Graduation and College Enrollment**

The number of Hispanic students who will graduate from high school is projected to increase in the next decade, from 218,358 in 1995/1996 to 517,746 by the school year 2011/2012 (Western Interstate Commission and the College Board, 1998, p. 73). By 2012, Hispanic students will represent 18.7% of all high school graduates, compared to the 13.4% that African American students will represent (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and the College Board, 1998, p. 73).

In some states, such as Arizona and New Mexico, Hispanic high school graduates will exceed non-Hispanic White graduates by 2012. In Arizona, for example, a total of 21,980 Hispanics (43.3% of the total graduates) are projected to graduate from high school in the year 2012, compared to 21,468 non-Hispanic Whites (42.3% of the total) (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and the College Board, 1998, p. 80).

In 2012, a total of 8,342 Hispanic students are projected to graduate from New Mexico high schools, 47.3% of the total graduates, compared to 6,340 non-Hispanic White graduates, or 35.9% (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and the College Board, 1998, p. 109).

The number of Hispanic students enrolling in college will increase from 1.4 million in 1995 to 2.5 million in 2015 (Carnavale & Fry, 1999, p. 73). These 1.1 million additional Hispanic students represent a 73% increase. By 2006, Hispanic students are expected to outnumber African American students enrolled in college (Carnavale & Fry, 1999).

### **Who Are HSIs Serving?**

HSIs play a significant role in educating Hispanic students in the United States. In fact, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) reported that although the 209 HSIs that were HACU members in 1997 represented only 5% of the total institutions of higher education in the country, they enrolled 648,000 Hispanic students—nearly half of all Hispanics enrolled (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2001).

One out of 3 Hispanic students enrolled in HSIs (30.8%) in 1997 attended California HSIs, as shown in Table 4. Almost one quarter (23.4%) were enrolled in Puerto Rican HSIs and nearly 1 in 5 (18.8%) were enrolled in HSIs in Texas.

Thus, almost three quarters of the Hispanic students enrolled in HSIs in 1997 (72.3%) were concentrated in California, Puerto Rico, and Texas. Al-

**Table 4**

Hispanic Student Enrollment at Hispanic-Serving Institutions in 1997, by State and Puerto Rico

<i>State</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
California	30.8
Puerto Rico	23.4
Texas	18.8
New York	5.5
New Mexico	4.8
Illinois	3.6
Arizona	2.7

SOURCE: Adapted from Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2001.

NOTE: Total number of Hispanic students enrolled in Hispanic-serving institutions in 1997 was 648,000.

most 9 out of 10 were enrolled in six states—California, Texas, New York, New Mexico, Illinois, and Arizona—and Puerto Rico. Colorado, Kansas, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington accounted for 3% of Hispanics enrolled in HSIs in 1997.

The U.S. Department of Education reported that from 1997 to 1998, HSIs had an aggregate student body that was about 72% minority. More than 50% of the HSI students were Hispanic individuals, 10% were African Americans, 7% were Asian/Pacific Islanders, and almost 1% were Native Americans (Benitez, personal communication, November 10, 2002).

### **Challenges and Issues Facing HSIs**

In November 2001, one of the authors wrote the presidents, chancellors, and CEOs of the HSIs in the United States and asked them to respond to two questions:

From your perspective, what are the three (3) most important challenges/issues/problems facing your institution in the next 2 to 4 years?

Are any of these challenges/issues/problems related directly to the fact that your institution is a Hispanic-serving institution? Why? How?

In addition, the author who wrote the letter asked the respondents to include a “quotable quote.” An up-to-date mailing list was obtained from HACU. When the HACU mailing list was reviewed, it became clear that the list included the leaders of both institutions that met the HACU definition of an HSI and the institutions that are HACU “associate members.” Because the intent was to include only HSIs, the HACU mailing list was compared with the list of HSIs recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (2002). This yielded a total of 167 presidents, chancellors, and CEOs to whom the letter and response form were sent. A total of 91 useable responses were received, or a response rate of 54.5%.

**Table 5**

Top Five Challenges/Issues/Problems Facing Hispanic-Serving Institutions During the Next 2 to 4 Years

<i>Challenge/Issue/Problem</i>	<i>Number of Responses (N = 91)</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
Funding	74	81.3
Technology	38	41.7
Faculty	35	38.5
Growth and diversity	31	34.1
Preparation of students, retention, and graduation	28	31.7

All the useable responses were read, transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed. The issues/challenges/problems identified were quite varied. Some of the responses were very focused and some were institutional specific. Others were more generic and broader in nature. After careful consideration and discussion, the responses were classified into five major categories: funding, technology, faculty, growth and diversity, and student academic preparation, retention, and graduation (see Table 5).

Some of the more focused, institutional-specific challenges/issues/problems addressed the nature of the institution, its location, and so forth. It might be fruitful and instructive to include a small sampling. For example, the president of a private university in Puerto Rico wrote that “being in Puerto Rico, as a Hispanic-serving institution, represents a challenge and a paradox. We should preserve our cultural heritage and follow the ‘American way of teaching.’”

The president of a community college in Manhattan listed as the first priority “rebuilding the facility that was lost as a result of the September 11th attack on NYC and finding additional classroom space. The college lost a 15-floor classroom and income producing property.”

The president of a large university in California listed as the third most important issue the “narrow range of majors that students selected upon entering. . . . For example, almost 90% of the Child Development majors, which is one of the three largest majors on campus, are Latinas.”

Another listed “the need to improve facilities, many of which are older than 30 years.” Another included “the growing elitism of who gets to be educated and who doesn’t.” The president of a rural community college in California listed child care and lack of transportation for migrant farm families. Finally, the president of a small private university indicated that the second most important issue/challenge/problem facing that institution was “building an endowment fund. Currently our endowment is only \$1 million; we need a \$10 million endowment.”

But the most important of the reported challenges/issues/problems facing HSIs was fiscal. More than 80% of the CEOs who responded—74 out of

91—listed lack of resources as an issue (see Table 5). They expressed the problem in different ways:

The downturn in the economy at the same time as an increase in the number of students applying to college.

The competition for financial resources within our regional college system and statewide providers of higher education. While the competition encourages creativity, accountability, and resourcefulness, it creates a greater arena for contradictory political and philosophical debates.

Funding to maintain the base program. California is suffering differentially from the national recession and funding to simply maintain existing programs is going to be a real challenge the next few years.

General funding—over 50% of students receive financial aid, never enough funding to serve students when you have a 3-year bargaining unit and old facilities—need to upgrade. Not enough funding.

Funding—Florida funds community colleges poorly; recent cuts exacerbate the problem; resource allocation is political, not rational.

Budget in the wake of September 11th and the effect on NYC.

Our major source of resources (the State of Colorado) is having budget problems and has reduced our budget. There is a very good chance our budget will be reduced again.

Adequate funding to support technology and equipment in the discipline areas, particularly sciences and applied sciences. Technology (hardware, software, equipment) is changing so rapidly that the cost to maintain quality of instruction will require the college to set clear priorities and to seek outside revenue sources.

The second challenge/issue/problem most frequently cited was technology. Of the 91 CEOs who responded, 38 (41.7%) listed different aspects of technology as important. As noted above, the cost of technology was a significant consideration and many CEOs wrote comments such as “funding technology needs,” “the inability to keep up with technology costs,” “technology—maintaining and upgrading is extremely expensive,” and “to keep pace with the continuing technological revolution. Can we afford it? Will the state support it?” Many similar statements dealing with the lack of fiscal resources and technology were reported.

But the issue goes beyond the cost of technology. Many CEOs were concerned about integrating technology into the teaching-learning process. One president wrote that her most important issue was “sustaining the infusion of technology in the college’s instructional program.” Another wrote that “integrating technology to the teaching-learning process is an encompassing matter.”

Another CEO considered the needs of the students in commenting on “the need for technology on campus and the digital divide of those we serve.” The president of a small community college worried about “implementing an aggressive technology flow.”

Finally, the president of one of the campuses of a large private university in Puerto Rico, who outlined all her three major challenges/issues/problems in terms of infrastructure, summarized the concerns of many when she wrote the following, in Spanish:

Infraestructura tecnológica: La rapidez con que evoluciona la tecnología y su impacto en la educación hace casi imposible a las instituciones universitarias mantener un ritmo adecuado de crecimiento y desarrollo en este renglón que esté a tono con lo que los patrones que emplean a nuestros egresados esperan.

(Technological infrastructure: The rapidity in the evolution of technology and its impact on education makes it almost impossible for universities to maintain an adequate rhythm of growth and development at a rate equal to expectations of the employers of our graduates.)

The third most frequently cited issue, which focused on faculty, was cited by almost 40% of those who responded: 35 out of 91 respondents (38.5%). Many were concerned about the difficulty of recruiting minority faculty. One California president wrote about “promoting faculty diversity in the face of Proposition 209 and constraints imposed by court rulings.”

Other representative responses included: “ability to attract qualified faculty—especially Hispanic and other underrepresented groups,” “diverse workforce—recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce, particularly minority faculty,” “capable faculty and managers—with diversity,” and finally, “attracting Hispanic faculty to a relatively small, private Catholic teaching institution.”

Many presidents related the issue of faculty to the financial condition of their institution:

There is a difficulty in getting and keeping top faculty, due to limited resources and demands on budget.

Recruiting and retaining faculty during such rocky financial times.

Funding and compensation of faculty in order to be competitive with private sector.

With declining resources, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain faculty, both full-time and part-time.

Salaries for faculty and staff continue to lag behind peers.

Another large group of respondents expressed difficulty in attracting a diverse faculty in certain disciplines:

Scarcity of Hispanic faculty trained in the biomedical sciences in basic and clinical research and as educators in medicine and other health professions.

Recruitment of credentialed minority and female faculty to teach in the areas of mathematics, science, and engineering.

And finally, the president of one of the campuses of a private university in Puerto Rico wrote, in Spanish:

Las nuevas disciplinas que surgen todos los días como resultado de la aplicación de nuevas tecnologías y conocimientos requieren que las instituciones recluten nuevos profesores en estas áreas, o los envíen a readiestrarse y/o prepararse para luego regresar como docente a las instituciones. Áreas como electrónica, astrobiología, biotecnología, para mencionar algunos ejemplos, son retos para las universidades en nuestro país.

(The new disciplines that spring up every day as a result of the application of new technologies and knowledge require that institutions recruit faculty in these areas or send present faculty away for retraining or for preparation to return later to teach at the institutions. Areas such as electronics, astrobiology, biotechnology, to mention some examples, are challenges for universities in our country.)

More than one third of the respondents—31 out of 91 (34.1%)—listed growth and diversity as an issue. Many wrote short answers, such as

Increased student enrollment.

Controlling enrollment when there are mounting demands on budget.

Dramatic increase in Latino enrollment as residency requirements loosen up in California again.

Our community has a continued growing Hispanic population. The college is faced with the challenge of serving these diverse educational needs.

Rapid population growth reflects a high influx of Hispanic population that presents further challenges for our college.

Growth of student enrollment—our growth curve is very steep.

Meeting needs of an increasing ESL [English as a second language] population.

The fifth major issue identified by 1 of every 3 respondents—28 out of 92 (31.7%)—related to the academic preparation of the students and the impact on retention and graduation. Examples of responses included

The level of college readiness of entering students, especially in English and Math.

The growing Hispanic student population is under prepared and in some growing numbers is also English-language challenged.

The continuing high percentage of students graduating from high school who need considerable remediation at the college level. As the number of students lacking basic skills increases, the college must continue to develop and strengthen academic and student support services that facilitate the achievement of their educational goals.

Under-prepared students resulting in low retention.

Increasing the retention and graduation rates of students, particularly minority students and specifically Hispanics and Native Americans.

Influx of Hispanic immigrants who are not ready for college.

The undocumented. We have estimated that half of the ESL students are this because they do not have social security numbers.

The respondents were equally divided on the question of whether the challenges/issues/problems they identified were directly related to the fact that their institution is an HSI.

For example, the president of a large public university in California who listed (a) reduction in state funding, (b) high average undergraduate continuation rates but low graduation rates, and (c) increased enrollment with high percentages of academically underprepared students as the issues faced by her institution, wrote

No. They are not related to HSI status. Our problems reflect state budget declines, poor urban K-12 schools (if not poor then certainly struggling) and the socio-economic status of our students.

The president of a university in New Mexico who listed (a) funding, (b) retention and graduation of students, and (c) diverse workforce as the three issues facing that institution responded

Yes and no. No in the sense that being an HSI located in the sunny Southwest will be a plus in attracting well-qualified minority faculty and staff. Yes in that as an HSI, this institution has a diverse student body, which is a strength, yet a challenge as well.

The president of a community college in Colorado who listed (a) enrollment growth, (b) staff and student diversity, and (c) revenue growth as the three most important issues wrote

No. However, we recognize that our city has close to a 50% Hispanic population. Therefore, student and staff diversity is a priority.

Finally, the president of a public university in California who listed (a) money and (b) change—the ability to adjust to new socio-political circumstances and new technologies—as the two major issues facing his institution, wrote

Not is a causal relationship. But California must expand participation rates and failure to do so will fall disproportionately on Hispanic and other “minority” groups.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has a number of limitations, the first being that only the presidents, chancellors, and CEOs of institutions that met the federal definition

of an HSI were included. Another limitation is the 54.5% response rate. Beyond that, there are limitations inherent to the methodology used: a survey with two questions that required short answers. In addition, the respondents were asked to return the completed survey quickly, which meant that they had little time for reflection or consultation with others at the institution. Further, the responses were tempered by each respondent's point of view, lack of insight, social desirability, and so forth.

Finally, another limitation is that introduced by the authors who, after reviewing the responses, categorized them into five general topics; others might have interpreted the responses differently and might have generated other topics.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

By the year 2000, the Hispanic population represented the largest minority group in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). Though Hispanic individuals are concentrated in 10 states, there are very few counties in the south and north without a Hispanic population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002). Hispanic individuals are underrepresented in terms of academic achievement at all levels (Carnavale, 1999; Harvey, 2002). A small number of institutions—279 of the 3,000 in the United States—meet the federal definition of HSIs and the majority of them are located in the 5 states with the largest Hispanic populations (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2001).

Even though HSIs represent only 5% of the total institutions of higher education in the country, they enroll almost half of the Hispanic students enrolled in higher education (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2001).

The research findings centered on (a) the most important challenges/ issues/ problems facing HSI CEOs during the next 2 to 4 years and (b) whether the identified challenges/issues/problems related directly to HSI status. Specifically, presidents, chancellors, and CEOs of HSIs reported a number of issues that were focused and institution specific, but they also reported more generic, broader problems that can be categorized into five general topics: funding, technology, faculty, growth and diversity, and student academic preparation, retention and graduation.

More than 80% of the respondents listed the lack of financial resources as an important issue and expressed the issue in different ways. For example, HSI CEOs cited specific fiscal challenges that focused on (a) the national recession, (b) increased competition for fiscal resources at the regional and state levels, (c) difficulty supporting and maintaining instructional technology, and (d) the continuation of budget cuts from the state level while student enrollment increases.

The second issue listed most frequently by the CEOs who responded was technology; the CEOs clearly cited challenges that involve issues beyond the cost of technology. For example, some CEOs cited technology challenges associated with the “digital divide” and technological infrastructure and implementation. Furthermore, although many CEOs linked the need to keep pace with the ever-changing technology environment, others were also concerned about the need to integrate technology into the teaching-learning process, citing the infusion of technology into academic programs as a complex challenge.

The issue that was the third most frequently cited focused on faculty, with most respondents noting the difficulty in hiring a diverse faculty. Some CEOs also expressed the problem of finding quality Hispanic faculty in certain areas, primarily in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering, whereas other CEOs linked the difficulty of hiring faculty with the fiscal problems facing their institutions. Furthermore, CEOs related funding issues and faculty-hiring difficulties to challenges involving the need to be competitive with the private sector, recruiting and retaining full-time and part-time faculty, and maintaining faculty salary schedules in rocky financial times.

The fourth most frequently cited issue that many presidents listed was the growth of Hispanic enrollment and the challenges that this growth brings to their institutions. Specifically, CEOs cited the challenges meeting the growing needs of English-as-a-second-language students due to Hispanic enrollment growth, as well as challenges serving the increasingly complex and varied educational needs of students associated with the high influx of the Hispanic population.

The issue that was the fifth most frequently cited by CEOs was the lack of student academic preparation to succeed in college and the need for remedial education and more services to increase retention and increase graduation rates. Some CEOs reported that a large percentage of Hispanic students graduating from high school and entering higher education doors arrive underprepared and ill-equipped to enter college-level courses. This increasing number of Hispanic students lacking basic skills poses both opportunities and challenges for faculty, instructional support educators, and student support services.

The respondents were equally divided on whether the issues/challenges/problems they identified are directly related to the fact that their institutions are HSIs. One half reported that some issues, such as lack of funding and the impact of technology, are not related to the fact that the institutions are HSIs; these are generic issues faced by most institutions of higher education. The other half of the participants who listed diversity, lack of student preparation, and retention as important issues/challenges/problems did find a relationship to the fact that the institutions are HSIs.

It is clear that HSIs serve a very high proportion of Hispanic students enrolled in institutions of higher education. In fact, the majority of Hispanic

students are concentrated in a small number of institutions in a few states (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2001). Many of the problems faced by HSIs mirror those that all institutions of higher education face—financial, technological, and faculty. But the challenges that the growing Hispanic student enrollment brings to the institutions might be unique to HSIs.

Although challenges associated with growing Hispanic enrollment exist, HSIs have the opportunity to prepare the future Hispanic leaders in the country because almost half of all Hispanics enrolled in institutions of higher education are enrolled in these institutions. Many Hispanic student-serving programs, initiatives, and models that promote and prepare future Hispanic leaders exist throughout the country, including Hispanic mentor programs, Hispanic community outreach events and initiatives, Hispanic student club involvement efforts, and local business/Hispanic student internship programs. Based on the demographic data and corresponding Hispanic student enrollment for institutions of higher education, the message is clear: HSIs and emerging HSIs are best positioned to turn the challenges associated with the fastest growing student cohort into the development of a growing wave of Hispanic leaders.

### **Recommendation for Future Studies**

This research study attempts to make a small yet meaningful contribution to the literature on HSIs in the United States, focusing on the issues/challenges/problems faced by those institutions as reported by their presidents, chancellors, and CEOs.

This research study raises a number of questions for future studies. For example, are the issues/challenges/problems faced by HSI community colleges the same as those faced by HSI proprietary institutions<sup>1</sup> or HSI 4-year colleges and universities? Are the issues/challenges/problems faced by HSIs the same as those faced by mainstream institutions? Are there, indeed, some that are unique to HSIs? If so, which ones?

Future studies could focus on “how” questions. For example, how will HSIs prepare the future Hispanic leaders in this country, given the issues/challenges/problems they face? How will HSIs approach the issue of the growing number of students who need English-as-a-second-language programs or who have weak academic preparation?

Finally, this study could be replicated from 4 to 5 years hence, using a survey with the same questions but perhaps enhanced by interviews of a representative sample of individual presidents, chancellors, and CEOs or a focus group discussion.

## Note

1. The federal definition for a proprietary institution is "A school or institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives compensation other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assumption of risk" (see U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2002, p. 529).

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