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**HIGHLY-ENGAGING COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THEIR
SUCCESSFUL HISPANIC STUDENTS**

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**HIGHLY-ENGAGING COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THEIR
SUCCESSFUL HISPANIC STUDENTS**

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Colin McLean, and my three daughters – Emma (3 years), Hannah (18 months), and Selah (due date – 02.01.09). I started the Community College Leadership Program in spring 2004, as a member of Block 60, married for less than a year, and without children. Although I enrolled with values of hard work and achievement, it seemed that I learned more about community college students and myself when I tried to persevere as a mother in the CCLP.

Not once in the course of these nearly four years did my husband fail to support my work, even at his sacrifice. He would take care of our children and clean our house in order for me to keep my head in the laptop and talk with students on the telephone. Through my time in the CCLP, Colin taught me how to serve others and showed me love through his servant leadership. I also learned much from the little people who need me most. While our daughters' need for my attention presented some challenges, they taught me much about patience and gave me a real need to press on. Believing that this treatise work is important, and wanting to complete the degree so my family's support would not be in vain, I learned from my husband and girls how to sacrifice – even my sleep, in order to finish.

It would have been easier to finish this degree before I became a mother, but I don't think it would have been as fruitful. Thank you, sweet family, for teaching me about service, perseverance, patience, and sacrifice – you helped

me learn qualities that enabled me to identify with the Hispanic students in this research.

I cannot write this dedication without thanking my parents. My mom consistently expresses her pride in my academic accomplishments (even though she admits that she “has no idea what I do”) and encourages me to finish the doctorate. Mom, I sometimes think you want “this” degree for me more than I do, and your sincere desire for my achievement is similar to what I heard from Hispanic students about their parents’ support. Dad, your examples of hard work and determination helped shape and prepare me for doctoral work. You were one role model who showed me how to persist and earn this degree – thank you.

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HIGHLY-ENGAGING COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THEIR SUCCESSFUL HISPANIC STUDENTS

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The purpose of this study was to investigate what contributes to Hispanic student engagement and success. The research was twofold, and included 1) a review of highly-engaging and Hispanic-serving community colleges' programs, practices, and services that contributed to Hispanic student success; and 2) an investigation of Hispanic students' experiences and relationships that contributed to their success. This was a qualitative investigation to illuminate quantitative data on four colleges across the United States that scored above-average on three or more *CCSSE* Benchmarks in 2007. Eighteen Hispanic students who were near degree or certificate completion and transfer were interviewed. This research also included Recommendations for Research and Practice, all for the purposes of promoting Hispanic student engagement and success in community colleges.

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CHAPTER 1, THE STUDY AND ITS CONTEXT

Hispanics became the nation's largest minority group in 2003 and will continue to increase more rapidly than any other group through the middle of the century (Santiago and Brown, 2004; Brown et. al, 2003; Laden, 2004; The Chronicle Review, November 28, 2003). The U.S. Census Bureau (2000) reported larger percentages of young Hispanics as compared to the national population – the median age for Hispanics was nearly 10 years younger than that of non-Hispanics (25.9 years as compared to 35.3 years). Nearly 25% of the overall U.S. population, as compared to 35% of the Hispanic population was under the age of 18. Data also show growth in percentages of Hispanic children. “According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics account for almost 20 percent of the population under 5 years of age (as cited in The Chronicle Review, January 16, 2004).” By 2020, “children of immigrants, or second-generation Latino youth, will increase by three million alone” (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003). As the Hispanic population grows, more Hispanics than ever are showing up on college campuses across the country. This population surge is one that can shape the nation, and it requires our attention – its influence, particularly for higher education, is one that we cannot afford to disregard.

I. THE HISPANIC POPULATION SURGE IS...

A. ...NO LONGER AN ETHNIC ISSUE.

Historically, the largest Hispanic populations were in California and Texas, and educational issues pertaining to Hispanics were issues specific to those states. More recently, the Hispanic population has diversified, increased, and migrated. In 2000, for example, the majority of Hispanics lived in the West (43.5%) and South (32.8%). More than half of all Hispanics lived in California (11 million of the total Hispanic population) and Texas (6.7 million of the total Hispanic population), and there also were at least one million Hispanics living in each of the following states Arizona, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York. Hispanics in New Mexico comprised approximately 42% of the state population – a larger proportion than any other state. The educational attainment of Hispanic persons is more than a geographical issue – and more than an ethnic issue.

B. ...NO LONGER “ONE SIZE FITS ALL.”

In addition to Hispanic population growth and migration throughout the nation, there also are cultural and economic differences within the Hispanic population that can affect uniquely educational experiences and outcomes. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the majority of Hispanics are Mexican (58.5%), and the largest Mexican populations reside in Los Angeles County (CA) – 3 million, Harris County (TX) – 815,000, and Cook County (IL) – 786,000. Puerto Ricans make up 9.6% of the Hispanic population, and they are most likely to reside in Bronx County (NY) – 319,000, Kings County (NY) –

213,000, and in Puerto Rico – where 96.3% of the total population identifies as Puerto Rican. More than half of all Cubans (52.4%) lived in Miami-Dade County (FL). From these data, it appears that most Mexicans live in states that border Mexico; most Puerto Ricans reside in New York and Puerto Rico; and most Cubans tend to live in Florida – and these different groups may not experience higher education in the same ways.

The variations in economic strata and social class of the Hispanic population further accentuate the diversity within this group; some come from upper-middle class families with children who unquestionably are “college-going” and many others come from impoverished and unstable backgrounds with children who do not even consider college as an option. These differences in socioeconomic status affect Hispanics’ unique experiences, perspectives, and expectations about higher education (Immerwarh, 2003). Simply put, not all Hispanics are the same, despite the generalizations often found in the research and literature (Fry, 2002).

C. ...REQUIRES ATTENTION.

One problem for educators and policy makers to address is this: Hispanics are more likely to fall through the educational pipeline at every level and are less likely to earn degrees at every level than are non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic others (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Hispanic educational attainment, then, is no longer about other states; it’s no longer about “them”; it’s no longer a geographic issue; it’s no longer an ethnic issue; and it’s no longer “one-size fits all.” The impact on the educational attainment of Hispanic persons will affect our

nation, and we need to give it our attention. Systematic descriptions of promising practices and programs designed at colleges with high percentages of Hispanic students, and information about successful Hispanic students' experiences, can help address this important issue – and hopefully assist in eliminating this attainment gap. ***Accordingly, the purpose of this research is twofold: 1) to investigate highly-engaging and high-percent Hispanic enrollment community colleges – what institutions do to purposefully engage students; and 2) to explore experiences that contribute to Hispanic student success.***

II. HISPANIC EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IS...

A. ...AN ECONOMIC NEED.

As a result of the youthful Hispanic population growth, many agree that America's future economic and social well-being may depend upon the academic and career attainment of the Hispanic population. Former president William J. Clinton's responded to the *White House Strategy Session on Improving Hispanic Student Achievement* on June 15, 2000 by asserting, "The choices and decisions we make about Hispanic education in the U.S. today are choices we make about the future of the U.S. itself (http://www.edexcelencia.org/pdf/Creating_the_Will.pdf, September, 2000, p.6)."

Juliet Garcia, Commissioner for the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, emphasizes the importance of improving the educational attainment for Hispanic students. "Hispanics can

become a powerful economic engine for this country, but only if we're trained and well educated; if not, the educational gap will become an educational gulf (http://www.edexcelencia.org/pdf/Creating_the_Will.pdf, September, 2000, p. 35).” The Lumina Foundation for Education past president, Martha Lamkin, comments, “It is critical that we work closely as a society to close the gaps in educational achievement between Latinos and other groups or risk potentially devastating economic and social consequences” (Higher Expectations document, p. 2). In more general but equally relevant terms, the Chronicle of Higher Education’s *Hispanic People on Campuses, Today and Tomorrow* (January 16, 2004) emphasizes connections between educational attainment of minority students and the economic competitiveness of the United States. “If we fail to ensure that all ethnic groups move through the higher-education system at comparable rates, the system itself – and the economic competitiveness of the United States – may be at risk (<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v50/i19/19b00402.htm>, p.1).” And if, according to Carnevale and Desrochers (2005), increasing the nation’s average level of education by one year can improve economic growth by about five to 15%, then it would follow that increasing the educational attainment of Hispanic students likewise can influence positively the nation’s economy.

Research also shows that Hispanics’ increased levels of education lead to higher earnings, less reliance on public assistance, and larger contributions to the tax system. Among Hispanics between the ages of 25 to 34 with nine to 11 years of education, 10% received income from public assistance, only 5% of

Hispanics with 12 or more years of education received assistance, and college graduates seldom receive such assistance. As Hispanics persist through the educational pipeline, they are less likely to depend on public assistance. Moreover, persistence to degree attainment, at each level in the pipeline, equates with sizeable increases in lifetime earnings (de los Santos, et. al, 2005). Another finding shows that Hispanics with bachelor degrees will pay more than twice as much in taxes as those with high school diplomas, and those with professional degrees will pay nearly three times as much as those with bachelor's degrees (Sorensen as cited in Gándara, 2006).

Eliminating this attainment gap additionally can improve the economic vitality of states with large Hispanic populations. Measuring Up (2004) provides State Report Cards for each state based on various educational measures; the organization shares information on the impact of closing the educational attainment gap on each state economy. Within that work, it shows that for the states with the largest Hispanic populations (AZ, CA, FL, IL, NJ, NM, NY, and TX), the following then would apply: *If all ethnic groups had the same educational attainment and earnings as whites across these states, then the total personal income in these states would be about \$176 **billion** higher, and these states would realize an estimated \$61 **billion** in additional tax revenues.* We cannot afford *not* to close these attainment gaps.

B. ...A WIDENING GAP.

Data show significant growth in the Hispanic population across the nation, and politicians and policy makers, researchers and educators, and the private

industry agree that the educational attainment of Hispanic students must be improved. *So, what is the current status of the Hispanic educational attainment?*

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004), the educational attainment of the population of persons 25 years and over shows that ***Hispanics are more likely to fall through the educational pipeline at every level and are less likely to earn degrees at every level than are non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic others.*** Table 1 below shows that gap.

TABLE 1 – Educational Attainment of the Population 25 Years and Over								
(Numbers in thousands)			Hispanic		Non-Hispanic, White alone		Non-Hispanic, all Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	186877	100	21596	100	134063	100	31218	100
Less than 9th grade	11747	6.3	5431	25.1	4430	3.3	1886	6
9 th to 12th grade (no diploma)	15998	8.6	3555	16.5	8986	6.7	3457	11.1
High school graduate	59810	32	5977	27.7	44022	32.8	9812	31.4
Some college or associate degree	47572	25.5	4027	18.6	35631	26.6	7913	25.3
Bachelor's degree	33766	18.1	1892	8.8	26569	19.8	5305	17
Advanced degree	17983	9.6	714	3.3	14425	10.8	2844	9.1
Less than high school diploma"	27745	14.8	8986	41.6	13416	10	5343	17.1
High school graduate or more	159132	85.2	12610	58.4	120647	90	25874	82.9
Less than bachelor's degree"	135127	72.3	18990	87.9	93069	69.4	23069	73.9
Bachelor's degree or more	51749	27.7	2606	12.1	40994	30.6	8149	26.1
<i>Hispanic refers to people whose origin are Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other.</i>								
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2004 Ethnicity and Population Division – Table 6.1.</i>								

As shown on Table 1, less than 20% of Hispanics completed some college or an associate degree as compared to nearly 27% of non-Hispanic whites and

26% of non-Hispanic others. Approximately 88% of Hispanics earned “less than a bachelor’s degree” as compared to nearly 70% of non-Hispanic whites and 74% of non-Hispanic others. Only 9% of Hispanics earned a bachelor’s degree as compared to nearly 20% of non-Hispanic whites and 17% of non-Hispanic others. Hispanics are least likely to have earned bachelor’s degrees or higher (12.1%) as compared to non-Hispanic whites (30.6%) and non-Hispanic others (26.1%).

While the national gaps in educational attainment for Hispanic students are evident from these findings, the gaps picture is increasingly obvious as data are disaggregated by immigrants and natives. For example, according to the Pew Hispanic Center (2002), 73% of U.S.-born Latino adults finish high school, 40% obtain some college, and 14% earn at least a four-year degree, but those percentages drop to 57% high school completion and 10% degree attainment when including Latino immigrants. This impact is exacerbated by the fact that more than half of Latinos are first-generation Americans – that is, foreign-born immigrants.

Similar to the national findings, Hispanics are less likely than are all comparison groups to attain associate’s degrees and bachelor’s degrees in the two states with the largest Hispanic populations: California and Texas (Measuring Up, 2004). Table 2 shows comparison percentages on attainment levels against a national average of 100 for California and Texas.

TABLE 2, Educational Attainment in CA and TX					
Associate's Degree or Higher			Bachelor's Degree or Higher		
	CA	TX		CA	TX
Asian/Pacific Islander	119	125	Asian/Pacific Islander	145	161
Native American/Alaskan Native	37	48	Native American/Alaskan Native	32	54
Hispanic	24	26	Hispanic	23	26
African American	48	43	African American	48	46
White	92	82	White	111	96

Asian/Pacific Islanders are most likely to earn degrees in both states, followed by whites. There is a large gap and then follows the degree attainment of African Americans, Native American/Alaskan Natives, and finally Hispanics.

These discrepancies may reflect the extent to which Hispanic adults place importance on higher education. In 2000, Public Agenda conducted a survey to elicit attitudes of parents of high school students on issues pertaining to higher education. Those findings show that 65% of parents of Hispanic students as compared to 31% of the general public, 32% of non-Hispanic white high school parents, 44% of black high school parents to agree that a college education is necessary for success in today's work world (Immerwahr, 2003). Clearly, there is a gap between parents' attitudes about the importance of higher education and Hispanic students' attainment of either two- or four-year degrees – a disproportionate percentage of parents' value higher education as compared to those Hispanic students who achieve. The Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation (October, 2002) shows similar findings on registered Latino

voters' (both foreign born and native) attitudes about education whereby 58% of Latinos as compared to 40% of whites and 46% of African Americans state that education is one of the two most important issues in deciding their vote. The importance Latinos place on education undervalues significantly the levels to which they achieve academically.

While some research focuses on gaps in participation of higher education for Hispanic students (de los Santos, et. al. 2005), access and enrollment are not the main obstacles for Hispanic students' educational attainment. In fact, Hispanic students are enrolling in higher education at equal rates as compared to their white counterparts, but are less likely to finish (The Chronicle of Higher Education, July, 9, 2004 and November 28, 2003). Several other studies show similarly that for Hispanic students, high enrollment does not reflect proportionately with degree attainment (Benitez, 2004; Census Bureau, 2004; Choy, 2002; Fry, 2002; de los Santos et. al., 2005). According to Roberto Suro, Director of the Pew Hispanic Center, "Non-Hispanic white high-school graduates are about twice as likely as their Latino counterparts to earn a baccalaureate degree (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003). Persistence, retention, and degree attainment are the main concerns for Hispanic students. ***Many Hispanic students seem to walk in, and then walk out of, the American higher education system. What, then, is happening with Hispanic students between their entry into higher education and their decision to leave?***

C. ...A FUNDAMENTAL CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

Community colleges primarily are the higher education institutions that can help to shed light on Hispanic students' experiences after they walk through the open door – and why so many exit through that same open door. According to the American Association of Community Colleges, “Students of Hispanic origin are the fastest growing racial/ethnic group at community colleges. The majority of these students indicate they are Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano dissent” (http://www.aacc.nche.edu/pdf/AboutCC_Minority.pdf). In fact, community colleges serve disproportionately more Hispanic students than other higher education institutions in the United States (AACC website; NCES, 2002). Community colleges enroll 56% of all Hispanic students in higher education (http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutCommunityColleges/Fast_Facts1/Fast_Facts.htm). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), there are 132 public Hispanic-serving institutions and 99 of those are two-year colleges. Hispanic enrollments in Hispanic-serving institutions account for nearly half (45%) of entire Hispanic student enrollment in colleges and universities (NCES, 2003b). Further, Hispanic enrollments in public two-year HSIs are approximately 390,000 as compared to less than 140,000 Hispanic students in public four-year HSIs (NCES, 2002). ***Simply, large percentages and numbers of Hispanic students enroll in HSIs, and those who enroll are nearly three times as likely to enter into two-year-HSIs.***

In addition to the overall growth of Hispanic student enrollment in community colleges across the nation, some states show patterns of larger

Hispanic enrollments and report disproportionate degree attainments. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) annual enrollment information by race for Texas community and technical colleges, white students make up 52% of the community and technical colleges' students, but this percentage has been shrinking. Trend data over the past twelve years show sizeable increases in enrollments of Hispanic and black students. Hispanic students now comprise 27%, blacks represent 12%, and other ethnic groups make up 7% of the student population in Texas community and technical colleges (THECB website). In New Mexico, Hispanics make up 42 % of the state population, but whites are three times more likely than those from other racial/ethnic groups to earn bachelor degrees (Measuring Up, 2004 for New Mexico). The importance of closing the attainment gap for Hispanic students is greater now than ever; it is evident that community colleges are being called to the task – these institutions that can serve a vital role in helping to improve outcomes for Hispanic students.

Hispanic students tend to enroll disproportionately in community colleges for various reasons, including starting college later, financial obligations to their families, and living with their families instead of living on campus while attending college (Pew Hispanic Center, Chronicle of Higher Education, July 9, 2004 – <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v50/i44/44a02302.htm>). Many also attend community colleges with aspirations to enroll in college part time (Fry, 2002; Immerwahr, 2003; Solorzano et. al., 2005).

Another reason community colleges are called to the task of effectively engaging and educating Hispanic students is the bridge they gap between high schools and four-year institutions. On February 6, 2001, an enrollment management report was published regarding examples of California institutions forming partnerships to serve minority students. Thirty-nine California Community Colleges joined together and forged partnerships with the University of California Los Angeles. Findings in that report show the need for and value of community colleges effectively preparing their transfer students for upper-level course work and especially for advanced English courses (Estrada and Herrera, February, 2001).

In 2003, the Grutter case (no. 02-241) found that factors, including race, should be included in the University of Michigan Law School admissions practices. Judge O'Connor was the swing vote that put forth the law which considered race and ethnicity in admissions practices. Because there was a defined period on the inclusion of race and ethnicity in admissions practices, and O'Connor has since then retired, institutions should not rely on admissions practices for minority student participation in higher education. This puts real emphasis on community colleges to effectively prepare Hispanic transfer students with skills necessary to succeed at four-year institutions – success at four-year institutions can enable opportunity and achievement in graduate, law, and professional schools

III. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The Large Numbers of Hispanic Students and Big Gaps in Their Educational Attainment Show the Need for Community Colleges to...

A. ...HIGHLY ENGAGE AND SERVE WELL THESE STUDENTS.

Community colleges, particularly those with high-percentages of Hispanic student enrollments, are called to provide high quality education to our nation's Hispanic students. And, research shows (Kuh, 2005, *CCSSE* website) that effective educational practices – practices that are shown to improve student learning and persistence – are designed to involve students in the types of activities that produce desired outcomes. Systematic descriptions colleges' promising practices and program and Hispanic students' experiences can offer examples to field of how to improve student engagement for Hispanic students and help them to be successful.

B. ...TO SHOW HOW WELL THEY PROMOTE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, LEARNING, AND PERSISTENCE.

Nearly 590 community colleges across 48 states use data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) for various purposes such as assessing institutional quality, promoting good educational practices and programs, and identifying opportunities for improvement. Annually, *CCSSE* highlights member colleges that score relatively high on three or more *CCSSE* benchmarks of effective educational practice, by institutional size

category. Some of those “highly-engaging” colleges also have high-percent Hispanic student enrollments. The 2007 *CCSSE* cohort data from highly-engaging and high-percent Hispanic student enrollment, and colleges’ descriptions about their promising practices and programs and their “successful” students, serve as foundational information for this treatise. Colleges’ systematic descriptions will help to paint a picture, showing what colleges do and what students do that helps to result in Hispanic student engagement and success. The focus of this work highlights successful Hispanic student experiences that help to produce desired outcomes.

IV. THERE IS VALUE IN AND NEED FOR...

A. ...UNDERSTANDING HISPANIC STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

There is a sizeable body of research on Hispanic student access and attainment – that is, what they bring with them to college and whether they attain (Fry, 2002). However, there is little large-scale research on what happens to Hispanic students during their college experience – and how those experiences might affect their outcomes. Aside from Greene (2005) and Johnson (2007), little is known about how the community college experience contributes to or inhibits Hispanic student success. As shown here in Chapter 1, there is value in and need for understanding college environments and Hispanic student experiences that contribute to successful outcomes.

B. ...FOCUSING ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT.

This study is focused on student engagement because research (Tinto, 1993; Kuh, 2005; McClenney and Marti, 2006; *CCSSE* website) shows positive correlations between student learning and persistence and student engagement. The more engaged students are – with their peers, faculty, and administrators; the more they invest in their college experience – both in- and out-of-the classroom; and the more they perceive their colleges support their abilities to succeed; the more likely they will learn, persist, and succeed. The *CCSSE* validation research further supports the value of employing student engagement as a foundation of this study. Findings in that research show that academic challenge and support for learners were predictors of Hispanic student outcomes such as GPA and credit hours earned (McClenney and Marti, 2006).

V. So, WHAT'S NEXT?

Chapter 2, ***Review of Relevant Research and Literature***, is supported by relevant data and student voices. To allow for a comprehensive understanding of challenges and opportunities for Hispanic students in community colleges, and because information on opportunities is limited, research and literature from multiple topics are incorporated. The following themes emerged from the research and literature review: ***persistence and degree attainment, risk factors, preparedness and remediation, college environment and campus climate, relationships, learning outcomes, and Hispanic student engagement.*** Examples from four-year colleges are incorporated in cases where evidence in two-year colleges is limited. The

research, literature, and data are highlighted by quotation excerpts from telephone interviews with Hispanic students from community colleges who completed at least two semesters as of fall, 2005.

Findings from the literature are used to guide Chapter 3, **Framework and Methods**, by providing themes from which to elicit stories from highly-engaging, high-enrollment Hispanic colleges; the literature also will help inform the Hispanic student interview questions. This chapter includes **Definitions of Terms, Assumptions, Research Questions** and a **Framework for the Study**.

Chapter 4, **Results**, will include colleges' stories – promising practices and programs from highly-engaging, high-percent Hispanic enrollment community colleges. This chapter also will highlight the Hispanic student experience by eliciting information from successful Hispanic students. Finally, Chapter 5 provides interpretation of the results – **Findings and Analyses** and **Recommendations for Research and Practice**.

CHAPTER 2, REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

Relevant research and literature includes both challenges and opportunities for colleges to effectively engage Hispanic students and help them to succeed. The researcher identifies in the literature sources that challenge Hispanic students' persistence and attainment and some promising practices and programs that can ameliorate these gaps. Review of the literature shows more challenges than opportunities and includes more about student inputs than institutional practices. Accordingly, this literature is categorized first by challenges and then by opportunities.

I. CHALLENGES INCLUDE...

This section on challenges includes a review of the literature on issues and factors that inhibit Hispanic student degree attainment and success. It also includes some examples of Hispanic students' experiences as they relate to this topic. The following topics are included in this section: Persistence and Degree Attainment; Risk Factors; Preparedness and Remediation; College Environment and Campus Climate; and Low Expectations, Minimal Results.

A. ...*PERSISTENCE AND DEGREE ATTAINMENT*

As shown in the previous section, there is a disproportionate enrollment of Hispanic students in community colleges and a concern that these students are not moving proportionately through the educational pipeline (Fry, 2002; Solorzano et. al., 2005). The *Community College Times* (July 6, 2004)

references findings on the Hispanics' college completion from the Pew Hispanic Center. The report shows that white students beginning at two-year colleges are more likely to persist to bachelor degree attainment than are Hispanic students who begin at two-year colleges (23% for whites as compared to less than 13% for Hispanics). Hispanic students have higher aspirations for earning bachelor's degrees than blacks and whites, but are less likely to earn those degrees (Community College Times, July 6, 2004). Moreover, some (Fry, 2002; Immerwahr, 2003; Solorzano et. al., 2005;) argue, with reasonable evidence, that Hispanic students are less likely to earn bachelor degrees by enrolling in two-year colleges as compared to four-year colleges.

To show gaps in persistence and attainment, Solorzano et. al. (2005) focus on the Latina/Latino educational attainment gaps throughout the educational pipeline as compared to white students and across ethnicities within the Hispanic population. They highlight the leakage points in the educational pipeline from elementary school, graduation from high school, college, graduate school, and finally to graduation with a doctorate. The researchers use national data to show leakage points as 100 elementary students persist through graduation from high school, college, and so forth. Of the 100 students in each racial/ethnic category at the elementary level, 26-white students, 14-African American students, 10-Latina/Latino students, 8-Chicana/Chicano students, 13-Puerto Rican students, 11-Dominican students, and 6-Salvadorian students graduate from college. Although whites and African Americans are more likely than the majority of Hispanic students to graduate from college, Cuban students

(21) are less likely than whites (26) and more likely than African Americans to graduate from college. Cuban students (1.2) are more likely than whites (1), African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Latina/Latinos (each 0.4), and Chicanos (0.2) to graduate with a doctorate.

A general review of the Hispanic educational attainment gap does not provide a complete picture of the variation within the Hispanic population. In another study (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2003), Cuban-Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 are slightly more likely than are their white peers to be enrolled in college, and 90% attend college full-time – more than any other racial or ethnic group. According to The Chronicle of Higher Education (2003), Cubans attend graduate school at similar proportions to their white peers, but Solorzano et. al. (2005) reports that Cubans attend graduate school at rates slightly above their white peers.

There also are gaps in persistence and attainment for Hispanic students within specific states. Measuring Up (2004) shows the ethnic distribution for Texas with 34% Hispanics, but only 24% of Hispanic students are enrolled in Texas higher education; Hispanics are the only ethnicity in Texas that shows this disparity. The State Report Card for Texas shows whites are more than twice as likely as their peers to have earned a bachelor's degree and this is among the widest gap in the country. "The number of Black students receiving certificates and degrees has increased from 9 to 13 per 100 enrolled, and the proportion of Hispanic students receiving certificates and degrees has increased from 9 to 12 per 100 enrolled" (Measuring Up, 2004). Both state report cards for California

and Florida show some improvement to bachelor degree attainments for students from ethnic minority groups: “a decade ago, 16 of every 100 adults from minority ethnic groups had a bachelor’s degree; now 21 of 100 do” (Measuring Up, 2004). In New York, 17 out of every 100 students from ethnic minority groups had a bachelor’s degree a decade ago as compared to 22 out of 100 in 2004. Solorzano et. al. (2005) cite the 2000-2001 California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) data to show that of every 100 Latina/Latino high school graduates, 40 persist on to postsecondary institutions. Of those, 30 enter at California community colleges, 3 begin at the University of California, and 7 at the California State University campuses. Of those who begin at the two-year college, only three Latina/Latinos transfer to the California State University and less than one will transfer to the University of California. There are some improvements in degree attainment for students from ethnic minority groups, yet gaps remain.

Some (Fry, 2002; Solorzano et. al., 2005) argue low degree attainment for Hispanic students is one outcome of attending two-year colleges. Kanter (1990) asserts placement of minority students in remedial and associate degree courses and placement of white students in transfer-level courses. Further, Pascarella and Terezini (2005) provide an example of the negative effects of attending a two-year college for high-ability minority students in specific areas of study. They reference, “Net of other factors, initial attendance at a two- verses four-year college appears to decrease the likelihood that high-ability minority students will persist in mathematics, science, and engineering careers” (p. 592). This finding

referenced a single-case study on minority students, and large-scale research on high-ability Hispanic students' persistence in mathematics, science, and engineering careers do not appear to be available.

CCSSE 2003 findings show that 63% of Hispanic students (n=5,754) as compared to 45% of non-Hispanic students (n=47,594) cite transfer as their main goal for attending college. However, only 28% of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic students make use of college transfer services. The sizeable difference in percentage of Hispanics who intend to transfer and those who use transfer services draws attention to community college transfer services.

B. ...RISK FACTORS

Hispanics and African Americans are more likely than are their white peers to experience factors that put them at risk of not achieving their educational objectives. ***Risk factors*** include academic under-preparation, single parent status, financial independence, full-time employment, first-generation student status, part-time college enrollment, delayed college enrollment, not having a regular high school diploma, caring for dependents, and identifying the cost of attending college as a significant issue (Astin 1993; Brown et. al, 2003; CCSSE website; Choy, 2001 and 2002; Downing, 2001; Greene, 2005, Immerwahr, 2003; Pew Hispanic Center, January 2004; McClenney, K., 2005). Hispanic and African American undergraduates are more likely than white undergraduates to display these risk factors. According to the Pew Hispanic Center (January 2004), the average number of risk factors for Hispanic undergraduates is 2.4 while for whites it is 2.0 and for African Americans, 2.7.

According to the Center, Hispanic students face challenges including their low rate of full-time enrollment (less than half are enrolled full-time – which is significantly below the rate for white students). Further, young Hispanic students are nearly twice as likely as whites to care for dependents or be single parents. Immerwahr (2003) also emphasizes that working 20 to 40 hours per week is not uncommon for Hispanic high school seniors – they have the competing goal of earning money immediately or foregoing that income, in the short run, to enroll in college. The immediate income may be very important for many Hispanic students, and many of those students have little knowledge about college expenses and are poorly informed about financial aid (Immerwahr, 2003). They are faced with decisions to give up immediate income to focus on an endeavor with few instant rewards and one that appears financially impossible. Or, they could do both, which seems to be the chosen path for many.

The following is an excerpt from a September 15, 2005 *CCSSE* telephone interview with Sylvia Costa, a third semester, 36-year old, Brazilian student from La Guardia Community College (NY) that brings to light some of these challenges:

If I had time, I would take more classes so that I could finish earlier, but I can't because of money. Because I have to work, I don't have time to take all the classes I want to take.

Throughout the interview, Costa re-emphasizes her need to work and how that takes time away from her education as shown below:

I need to study more, but I don't have enough time. I have to find time. I have to reduce my hours of work, but I need to survive financially – I need money to survive because I help my family in Brazil. I have a loan, but it's not enough.

It is not uncommon for Hispanic students to seek employment for the purposes of supporting themselves, their families in the United States, and their families outside the nation.

In addition to many of the above risk factors, Jose A. Vicente, president of the North Campus of Miami Dade College, offers additional issues of concern for Hispanic students including high levels of poverty and cultural differences. According to Vicente, the Hispanic cultural background influences Hispanic students because they are more likely than whites to be first-generation college students and to live at home and are less likely to enroll in college directly after high school (Community College Times, July 6, 2004). Dr. Rendòn, professor at California State University at Long Beach, further emphasizes the many challenges Latino students face and why they have a difficult time staying. She asserts, “Many working-class, first-generation Latinos experience feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and cultural shock...” (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003). Rendòn also addresses an outcome of Latino students’ first-generation status whereby many Latinos have little knowledge about what it takes to succeed after they have been admitted (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003).

Elisa, a 39 year-old Mexican, has attended NMSU–Dona Ana Branch Community College, on and off, for several years in pursuit and completion of her GED, and consecutively for the past two semesters to pursue aspirations of becoming a nurse. Elisa’s response to whether she has ever thought of quitting college helps make personal what Vincente refers to as “cultural differences” and what Rendón refers to as “feelings of inadequacy, isolation and cultural shock.”

*Those times when I have to write a paper – like I said, English is not my first language, but **you** don’t have any idea how difficult it is when **we**’re barely able to speak the language and we’re taking college-level classes. Sometimes, when I’m doing a paper over and over and over, it has to be as good as the other students’ papers, I sometimes feel like I want to quit...but I’m not quitting!*

There potentially are unique risks for students in HSIs. CCSSE 2003 findings show that approximately 35% of students from HSIs as compared to 7% of students from other institutions enroll in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses or indicate plans to enroll in those courses; 12% of students from HSIs as compared to 5% of students from other colleges are “international”; and 43% of students in HSIs as compared to 30% of students from other colleges are “first-generation.” Hence, HSIs enroll larger percentages of students with limited English-speaking abilities, students from other countries, and other students with little or no knowledge of or experience with higher education than do other institutions.

C. ...PREPAREDNESS AND REMEDIATION

For Hispanic students, challenges to educational attainment do not begin in college or even in high school (Pew, 2002). According to Pompa and Santiago (2004), an early start in education correlates positively with student preparedness when they enter into the school system. Black and white children, ages three through five, are more likely than are Hispanic children to participate in center-based early childhood care and education (Excelencia in Education, Inc., 2004). “In 2001, 40 percent of Hispanic children aged three to five attended such programs, compared with 64 percent of black children and 59 percent of white children (p. 2).” Pompa and Santiago assert the importance of exploring strategies that inform and engage Hispanic parents and communities regarding early childhood education programs.

Unfortunately, for many Hispanic students, challenges to their college preparedness begin early when Hispanic children receive little exposure to English and are more likely than their white peers and nearly equally likely as their black peers to be living in poverty. Many schools in which Hispanic students attend are among the nation’s most segregated and poorly financed (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003). Moreover, the Pew Hispanic Center highlights achievement gaps early on by referencing the *Early Childhood Longitudinal Study* of the U.S. Department of Education’s spring 2001 average math test scores as 45.5 for whites, 40.0 for Hispanics, and 38.4 for African American kindergartners; Hispanic students with parents born in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic scored significantly lower than whites,

but students with parents from Cuba outperformed their white peers (January, 2004).

One possible result of ill-preparation in early years results in the fact that Hispanic high school graduates are less qualified than their white peers for college. Forty-seven percent of Hispanic students as compared to 32% of white students are “not college qualified” to enroll in four-year institutions and only 19% of Hispanic students as compared to 35 % of their white peers are “highly qualified” or “very highly qualified” to enroll in four-year colleges (citation). A recent report in *Community College Week* (September 12, 2005) supports these findings and shows that Hispanic students are taking college entrance exams in record numbers, but Hispanic students’ scores on these tests remain below the national average. “The scores suggest that many [Hispanic students] will have a hard time in college or will need remedial help to fill some of the academic skills gaps,” said ACT chief executive officer, Richard L. Ferguson (*Community College Week*, September 12, 2005. p.3). Large numbers of Hispanic students taking entrance exams shows promises for Hispanic students’ participation in higher education, but lower-than-average scores reflect continued challenges after students’ enrollment. Hence, increased access is not sufficient for promoting success and closing these gaps.

Findings show that Hispanic students are more likely than are their non-Hispanic peers to need and benefit from language and developmental courses and services (NCES, 2003; *CCSSE* 2004). Accordingly, Hispanic students are likely to participate in those types of courses, but many may not move from those

courses into regular college-level courses. With that, effective ESL and developmental courses that foster student persistence toward degree attainment are the keys to success for many institutions (Roueche and Roueche, 1999), and particularly for Hispanic-serving community colleges. Yet, Hispanic student outcomes suggest that many institutions do not seem to place first importance on high quality ESL and developmental courses.

D. ...COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT AND CAMPUS CLIMATE

Rendón charges colleges' with responsibilities of creating inclusive environments. She argues, "Institutions haven't fostered inclusive environments where students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds can interact and are comfortable with each other" (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003). De los Santos et. al. (2005) contends that higher education institutions should improve the environmental climate for Hispanic students by providing effective and helpful mentoring services and student activities and services that show acceptance of and appreciation for the Hispanic culture. Further, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) connect minority students' negative perceptions of the college environment with important experiences that support student success. They assert that

perceptions of racial-ethnic prejudice and tension, particularly when seen in students' peers, have statistically significant and negative net effects on minority students' transition and adjustment to college as well as on their sense of belonging and attachment to their institutions (p. 420).

Although this finding is not specific to Hispanic students, other findings show that learning outcomes for Hispanic students also are affected by college environments and climates. In particular, Pascarella and Terezini (2005) emphasize that elements of covert discrimination in college environments tend to have stronger negative effects on the critical thinking gains of Latinos than on their peers.

E. ...RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Some research shows that faculty from the same racial and ethnic backgrounds can influence positively student success (Henriksen, 1995; Pompa and Santiago, 2004) – and the absence of such influence would suggest potential negative effects. In fact, according to Rendon and Valadez (1993), lack of faculty members' cultural understanding about students can keep students from persisting. Dr. Rendòn further asserts, "Latino students feel their interests are marginalized in the curriculum, and they have few Latino faculty members to serve as their mentors" (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003). According to Immerwahr (2003) Hispanic high school seniors' report that some educators provide little guidance or show little interest in their futures. Many of those students also report that they received little attention or advice from high school guidance counselors.

Immerwahr (2003) adds to challenges faced by Hispanic students by highlighting the lack of adult supervision by parents who are unfamiliar with higher education – many who did not attend higher education and some who did not even complete high school. Arturo Madrid, professor of Humanities at Trinity

University, also emphasizes the absence and importance of role models for Latinos. He contends that Latinos will face challenges to access and success in higher education particularly because of their first-generation status. As a result of that status, Madrid argues that Latinos have no familial role models, mentors, or sponsors to assist with their access and success; these students are dependent on guidance from faculty and student-services professionals who lack the resources necessary to guide effectively Latino students (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003).

Moreover, the absence of Hispanic faculty, administrators, and student services professionals to serve as role models appears to be an impending obstacle. As a result of the small percentages of Hispanic students completing graduate degrees, few are qualified to assume faculty positions and serve as role models. In the Chronicle of Higher Education's Letters to the Editor on *Hispanic People on Campuses, Today and Tomorrow*, Jose L. Torres, Dean of Science and Technology at the College of Staten Island (NY) argues for increasing Latino faculty members to serve as role models: "we must do something about the absence of Latino role models among faculty members (<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v50/i19/19b00402.htm>, p.1)."

F. LOW EXPECTATIONS, MINIMAL RESULTS

Madrid warns against faculty and student-services professionals' low expectations of whether Latino students can make it in higher education (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003). Other research supports this warning, but emphasizes that low expectations of Hispanic students happen

before college. During high school, teachers' low expectations of Hispanic students can keep these students from enrolling in college. In fact, interviews with teachers in predominately Hispanic schools show some examples of teachers' feeling overwhelmed, putting blame on Hispanic students and their families, and having little or no energy to help motivate the Hispanic college-bound potentials. Teachers emphasize that Hispanic students did not have enough opportunities to pursue post-high school vocational training (Immerwahr, 2003). Accordingly, many of the Hispanic students who have potential to enroll and achieve in higher education do not receive the encouragement necessary by teachers to help with their movement through the pipeline. Solorazano, 2005 also warns about the negative affects of low expectations, either by way of "deficit thinking" about certain students or as a result of racism, on students in elementary-, secondary-, and postsecondary-levels.

II. OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE...

This section on opportunities includes review of issues pertaining to **Persistence** for Hispanic students and minority students in community colleges. It also includes factors that contribute to **Hispanic Student Engagement**. For the purposes of this section, the author applies the Community College Survey of Student Engagement's (CCSSE) five benchmarks of effective educational practice to organize review of areas pertaining to **Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Effort, Academic Challenge, Student-Faculty Interaction,** and **Support for Learners**. Additional promises include review of **Relationships that Matter** and **High Expectations, Big Results**.

A. ...PERSISTENCE.

Despite the many obvious and significant challenges, the picture of persistence and attainment of bachelor degrees for community college students includes some promises. Some (Brown et. al., March/April 2003) recognize that Hispanic students are most likely to enroll in two-year colleges, and thus, efforts must be addressed to ascertain ways in which two-year colleges can contribute to Hispanic student success.

Although Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) do not provide information on the transfer and attainment of Hispanic students specifically, they reference transfer and degree attainment of students who enroll in community colleges with specific expectations for earning bachelor's degrees.

The difference in bachelor's degree completion rates appears to lie in whether community college students seeking a bachelor's degree actually transfer to a four-year institution. Once across that bridge, community college transfer students have about the same likelihood of earning a bachelor's degree as do similar students who began at a four-year college or university, although community college students tend to take longer to complete their degrees (p. 592).

This finding is promising for students who have moved from the two- to the four-year college, but the challenge remains that Hispanic students are less likely than are their white peers to persist through the transfer function (Fry, 2002).

One response to this finding could be successful transfer is the main outcome by which Hispanic transfer- and bachelor degree-hopefuls can earn bachelor degrees at rates similar to their four-year counterparts, but few Hispanic students actually achieve that outcome. Another response follows: the community college transfer function is the best option for the majority of Hispanic students to pursue the bachelor degree simply because those students enter into higher education through the open door college.

Although multiple researchers argue that community colleges produce low transfer rates, serve a “cooling out” function, and redirect students (Clark, 1960; Karabel, 1972; Fry, 2002; Solorzano et. al, 2005), these institutions can offer students some opportunities for increasing students’ educational attainment. Community colleges can serve as vehicles to provide students with transfer options to four-year institutions that previously were not available. For example, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) recognize transfer benefits of community colleges, specifically for those students who need it most.

Net of other factors, students who initially enroll in a community college are able to transfer to more academically selective four-year institutions (defined by average entering student SAT scores) than they could have enrolled in directly out of high school. This effect was most pronounced for students who came from poor families, who were low in tested ability, or who performed poorly in high school (pp. 592-93).

There are other practical ways to promote Hispanic student persistence. For example, the Lumina Foundation supports the success of Hispanic students

and strengthens Hispanic student persistence through various grants. It awarded a grant of nearly \$350,000 to the University of Southern California (Los Angeles, CA) for the purpose of improving and measuring African-American and Hispanic students' transfer between two-year and four-year institutions. It also awarded the Hispanic Education Center, Inc. (Indianapolis, IN) a grant for \$200,000 to support the Center's pre-college access program, El Puente. <http://www.luminafoundation.org/grants/20041QGrants.html>. Additionally, the Foundation has supported the Achieving the Dream Initiative, a multi-year initiative designed to increase graduation rates and close performance gaps between whites and minorities <http://www.luminafoundation.org/newsroom/Jan2005/AtD.html>.

B. ...ENGAGING HISPANIC STUDENTS THROUGH...

...ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING.

According to *CCSSE*, “students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings (*CCSSE* Web site, http://www.ccsse.org/survey/bench_active.cfm, November 5, 2008).” Simply, ***Active and Collaborative*** learning is the extent to which students actively collaborate with each other both inside and outside the classroom to achieve their educational objectives. Sanchez (2000) references studies that examine the impact of culture on the learning preferences for Hispanic and Native American college students, and asserts that as compared to white students, both

Hispanic and Native American students exhibit a high propensity for participation in active, concrete learning experiences, cooperative situations, oral dialogue, and interpersonal relationships. Below are some examples of **Active and Collaborative Learning** as they relate to Hispanic students.

Edwina Stoll, Professor of Communication & Director of the LINC Program at De Anza Community College (CA) provides some ways in which the learning community model can improve the performance of Latino community college students. Like many other two-year colleges in California, De Anza Community College enrolls a large number of Latino students who are primarily first-generation, low-income, employed part- or full-time, and have delayed entry for more than five years post high school. De Anza Community College has focused its efforts on building a sense of community through the learning community model in which group cohesion, collaborative teaching and learning, and interdisciplinary studies. According to Stoll, these learning communities have helped increase retention, academic performance, and progress toward degree attainment (<http://www.edexcelencia.org/pdf/HigherProceedings.pdf>), though no data were provided in the article to support those claims.

Estella is a 46-year old Mexican who has attended NMSU – Dona Ana Branch Community College for five years and planned to graduate in December 2005 (September 20, 2005 telephone interview). Her response below is about whether she has thought about quitting college, and it highlights the importance of peer collaboration:

But, I have friends who keep me from quitting – we're all going through the same thing; we borrow money from each other when we need; there is morale between the students because we're in a small group – we are so close to each other. We help each other with everything – if one of us doesn't understand something, we study together – yesterday, we spent two hours in the cafeteria talking about our exam. If someone misses for one day, you get the notes for him and explain to him what he missed. We are very, very close. We're a small group, about 10 or 12.

With approximately 47% Hispanic student enrollment, Lehman College of the City University of New York system also implements programs to foster peer interaction and collaboration. The college operates a program to keep freshmen together in groups of 25 to 30 and encourages students to provide each other with support. Faculty members share information with each other about particular students and seek to integrate their courses in ways that allow students in an English composition class to write assignments for a sociology professor. Ricardo R. Fernandez, the college president, contends that this program keeps many students from dropping out during their first year (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2003).

Carolina is a 26 year-old, Hispanic female who has attended La Guardia Community College (NY) for the past two years. In addition to her educational objectives, Carolina raises two young sons as a single-parent and works part time. She emphasizes some ways collaboration with other students improves academics by sharing information about her cluster class.

All of us are in the cluster, so we see each other all the time (four days per week). We talk with each other and help each other if we don't understand something. The cluster is meant to serve as a resource, not only with the teachers, but also with the students. I have made friends there. They accept criticism and I accept criticism, so that improves our academics.

...STUDENT EFFORT.

According to *CCSSE*, “students’ behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will attain their educational goals. ‘Time on task’ is a key variable, and there are a variety of settings and means through which students may apply themselves to the learning process” (*CCSSE* Web site). The following is an example of how one college encourages Hispanic students to exert effort in various settings.

Hispanic students at Gainesville State College (GA) are encouraged to participate in the college’s Office of Hispanic Outreach and Development year-long Leadership Development Program. Many Hispanic students also join the Latino Student Association (LSA) and participate in community service activities that highlight the value of higher education for young people in the community. Hispanic students’ involvement in college activities has also increased dramatically. As a result of these and other efforts, Hispanic student retention is increasing, with 73% of full-time freshman students enrolled Fall 2004 returning in Fall 2005 (*CCSSE* Highlights, March, 2006).

... **ACADEMIC CHALLENGE.**

The **Academic Challenge** benchmark emphasizes “challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality.” **Academic Challenge** includes the type and amount of assigned academic work, the difficulty of cognitive tasks, and the evaluations of student performance (CCSSE Web site). Included in this section are some examples of **Academic Challenge** as they pertain to Hispanic students, students of color, and/or students enrolled in community colleges.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlight some learning outcomes for Latino students.

Single-sample evidence indicates that an institution’s environmental emphasis on being critical, evaluative, and analytical produces greater gains for Latino students on measures of first-year critical thinking skills than for other students (P&T, p. 621).

The above finding is not specific to gains in critical thinking skills for Latino community college students, but there are additional findings on learning benefits of attending community colleges. Students of color, older students, and less affluent student – all of which are characteristics of many Hispanic students – tend to benefit from attending community colleges. In particular,

...the kinds of students appearing to derive the greater learning benefits from attendance at a community college tend to be students of color, older students, and less affluent students – all of who are most likely to attend a

community college (verses a four-year institution) in the first place (Pascarella and Terezini, 2005; p. 621).

Pascarella and Terezini (2005) also highlight additional learning benefits for students of color at community colleges including reading comprehension, mathematics, and writing skills:

Single-sample evidence suggests that students of color derive larger first-year reading comprehension and mathematics benefits at two-year colleges than at four-year colleges, whereas their white counterparts benefit more on these dimensions of learning from attending a four-year college...Students of color who are relatively older and from low socioeconomic backgrounds gain more in writing skills from attending a two-year college, whereas relatively younger white students from high socioeconomic backgrounds gain more in writing skills from a four-year college (p. 621).

Although the above findings are not specific to Hispanic students, they reference students who share some characteristics similar to many Hispanic students including older students and those from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds.

Challenging Hispanic students academically may require a change in thinking for faculty and student services professionals. Dr. Rendon urges faculty and student-services professionals to consider students' varying backgrounds when shaping what happens in the classroom. She argues that students bring with them diverse experiences that have shaped their learning, and practitioners

need to engage these multiple identities rather than assume that all students will follow effectively one approach to learning (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 2003).

...STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION.

CCSSE describes ***Student-Faculty Interaction*** as follows: “the more interaction students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and persist toward achievement of their educational goals” (*CCSSE* Web site). Students’ involvement with faculty can strengthen student engagement and connection to college and can help their academic progress. “Through such interactions, faculty members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning” (*CCSSE* Web site). According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), faculty and staff shape students’ perceptions of campus climates, especially those of students of color. Pompa and Santiago (2004) cite that for Hispanic students, having teachers of the same race/ethnicity result in higher student achievement in both reading and math. As such, this section incorporates an example of purposeful connections between a Hispanic student and her instructor.

The following is an excerpt from a *CCSSE* interview on September 20, 2005 with Rosa, a 38 year-old female who came from Mexico with no English skills and a sixth grade education. Rosa earned her GED from NMSU – Dona Ana Branch Community College and has been taking courses in Electronics Technology and Biomedical Technology there for the past three years. She emphasized the importance of faculty influence in her response to the following

question: “When you think about the instructor who has made the most difference to you, tell me what it is that faculty member does?”

Oscar Perez, taught electronics. He always tried to accommodate us by getting us the classes we needed. He looked for the things we needed (specific courses) to help us finish school. He was trying to teach us enough information in one class so we would not be behind in the subsequent classes. He tried to accommodate us by providing information about job openings – he had contacts that enabled him to connect students with jobs.

According to Rosa, a faculty member who makes great difference for her assists with course advising, teaches to ensure competency and promote persistence, and connects students with job opportunities.

... SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS.

The CCSSE Web site highlights the **Support for Learners** benchmark as follows:

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships among different groups on campus. Community college students also benefit from services targeted to assist them with academic and career planning, academic skill development, and other areas that may affect learning and retention.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) emphasize the impact of campus climate on student persistence by noting “A growing number of studies examine the effects on persistence and degree completion of campus racial and ethnic diversity and students’ perceptions of their campus’s racial climate” (p. 419). The Lumina Foundation (2004) indicates that college climates should be inclusive and welcoming for all students – particularly those from first-generation and minority backgrounds, and recognizes the connection between student services and student retention. Santiago et. al., (January, 2004) indicate one strength of an effective Hispanic-serving institution is the offering of culturally sensitive programs and services. Moreover, Kuh (2005) states, “important to student learning are institutional environments that are perceived by students as inclusive and affirming (p.8).” With that, this section includes examples of how colleges create environments designed to promote Hispanic student success.

St. Philip’s College (TX) is a historically black and Hispanic-serving institution with an enrollment that is about 20% black and 50% Hispanic. The former president, Angie S. Runnels, asserts that Hispanic students benefit from services developed for black students. Those services include tutoring programs; instructional laboratories focused on reading, writing, and mathematics; and a student advising approach that disperses counselors into academic divisions and departments to ensure effective guidance (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2003).

The majority of Gainesville State College’s enrollment is first-generation Hispanic students with significant financial challenges. To provide the necessary

support for Hispanic student success and retention, the Gainesville State College's Office of Hispanic Outreach and Development staff guides students through the admissions process and helps them obtain financial aid. From there, each student is assigned a peer mentor who helps with the significant transition from high school to college. These practices and other programs designed to engage Hispanic students have helped improve the college's Hispanic student retention rates (*CCSSE Highlights*, March, 2006).

The University of Texas – El Paso is a Hispanic-serving institution and one example of a four-year college dedicated to expanding educational opportunity for students who by traditional measures are not expected to succeed in higher education. UT El Paso provides support for its learners both within and beyond the classroom. For example, its values are enacted by open-door admissions, emphasis on undergraduate teaching, first-year transition and orientation courses that help students acquire study skills and self-confidence, and it offers rewards for meaningful student-faculty interaction (Kuh, 2005).

More than 25,000 Hispanic students attend one of the four community colleges that make up the Alamo Community College District (TX). In the past, the type of developmental education these students received depended on which college they attended, but data showed these institutions were not significantly different. Through the Achieving the Dream initiative, colleges within the ACCD began to work together. Faculty and staff from all four colleges will collaborate to determine best practices for teaching developmental math. They also will review the content of gatekeeper courses such as English composition, history, and

college algebra for purposes of ensuring the content is coordinated with the developmental courses. Finally, they will examine the way in which the college advises students, with an emphasis on informing students about taking courses in proper sequence

(<http://www.luminafoundation.org/newsroom/newsletter/July2005/AtDPhase2.html>).

During a telephone interview, a Hispanic female student from NMSU-Dona Ana Branch Community College acknowledges some opportunities community colleges make available to students:

In this country, the people who don't study are because they don't want to study, and not because they cannot. Here, people can get financial aid, and the Dona Ana Branch offers so much.

C. ...RELATIONSHIPS THAT MATTER.

Meaningful relationships are a key component of student engagement. For the successful Hispanic high school seniors in Immerwahr's study (2003), a teacher, role model, or strong adult in the family helped the students to persist. Additionally, in Gándara's study of high-achieving Latino students, the author argues that supportive adult networks including teachers, counselors, and others in the schools and communities and peer groups can serve as resources to high-achieving Latino students who are from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Institutional diversity also can support relationships in ways that improve student outcomes.

Some evidence suggests that a campus's proportional racial mix (its structural diversity) is positively related to interracial interactions and interracial discussions and that it indirectly promotes persistence and degree completion (Pascarella and Terenzini, p. 419).

According to Greene (2005), relationships contribute to the academic success of Hispanic community college students to the extent that engagement is both a human and academic experience. Findings show that Hispanic students' academic success involves others, particularly faculty members and peers. Moreover, Hispanic students indicated that academically-oriented relationships supported their success. In fact, this research shows that Hispanic students' strong relationships with peers, faculty, and administrators is "what matters most" to Hispanic student success.

Institutions also can forge external relationships that promote Hispanic student success. For example, the University of Texas at Brownsville (UT-Brownsville) and Texas Southmost College has transformed itself from a small community college to a leading producer of Hispanic baccalaureate degrees in mathematics, foreign languages, and other fields. According to the president, Juliet Garcia, the institution's success has been the result of its commitment to civic engagement. Garcia contends that the university has developed as a result of strong support and personal involvement from local politicians, business leaders, and other community stakeholders. Moreover, it has encouraged its students to participate actively in the civic life of the southwest of Texas (Higher Expectations, <http://www.edexcelencia.org/pdf/HigherProceedings.pdf>).

Santa Ana Community College (CA) has developed relationships with local partners to help serve the area's Latino student population, which now makes up 92% of the region's public school enrollment. Through community mapping strategies, the college has reached out to local businesses, parents, clergy, and other community leaders to gain valuable insights into the needs of its Latino students – and to understand how to become an integral part of their support system. Santa Ana Community College elicited support from the local community by sponsoring a series of educational forums in which they brought together 500 community members to focus on the transition from high school to college, college financial aid, and other related topics. Some outcomes from those forums included collaboration between the college and local organizations to improve students' educational outcomes by lobbying for core curriculum in the schools and introducing students to the culture and rigor of college (Higher Expectations).

D. ...HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND BIG RESULTS.

Engaging Hispanic students in educationally purposeful activities and setting reasonably high expectations for them can promote their persistence. And, recognizing the diversity among Hispanic students can prompt colleges to implement programs and practices that are tailored to engage and hold high expectations of specific students. La Guardia Community College's (NY) International High School is devoted specifically to the education of recent immigrants. To enroll, students must be recent immigrants and score at the bottom 20% of the city's language assessment. The program uses a teacher-

designed curriculum that emphasizes rigorous academics, a focus on developing English language skills, and an internship program. With high expectations of all students, the school boasts a strong record of student achievement. In fact, most of its students are low-income and enter at below grade level, but 90% of the students graduate and 90% enroll in college (Higher Expectations, p. 4).

Immerwahr (2003) emphasizes that one person with high expectations can make a positive difference for Hispanic students. In one example, a Hispanic male tells that he won a four-year scholarship to one of the campuses of the California State University as a result of encouragement from a high school music teacher who helped him apply for the scholarship. In another example, a Hispanic female shares her intentions to complete a four-year degree were the result of her mother's high expectations for her to improve herself through education.

III. DISCUSSION OF THIS REVIEW.

The relevant research and literature show some interesting differences between the information available on **Challenges** and **Opportunities** for Hispanic students in higher education and particularly for those who enroll in community colleges. For example, the section on **Challenges** includes student input factors – those things students bring with them to the college environment – such as **Risk Factors** and **Preparedness and Remediation**. The sections on **College Environment and Campus Climate** and **Low Expectations, Minimal Results** are institutional factors that impact student experiences and outcomes. Finally, challenges pertaining to **Persistence and Degree Attainment** could be

considered outcomes of the above inputs and experiences. As the impact of community colleges on Hispanic student outcomes is the result of those things that happen during the college experience, these institutions cannot be held accountable, exclusively, for some of the challenges presented in this literature.

The community college's role in closing the educational attainment gap for Hispanic students suggests that these institutions can improve outcomes by affecting direct improvements to their environments and students' experiences. Community colleges can be called to shape improvement areas as they relate to campus environments and climates, relationships, and expectations – and such improvements may increase educational attainment. It is for this purpose that this research will investigate college environments and student experiences that contribute to Hispanic student success.

Except for Hispanic parents' high value on education, the section on ***Opportunities*** focuses not on input characteristics (like the section on ***Challenges***), but rather on environmental factors and student experiences that contribute to student persistence and attainment. Hispanic student engagement, relationships, and high expectations are factors on which community colleges can focus improvements to promote Hispanic student persistence and attainment. Many colleges show examples of promising practices for Hispanic students, but few large groups of colleges or systems document evidence of effectiveness either through degree attainment or transfer rates.

According to this review of relevant research and literature, these hypotheses follow: (H1) Hispanic students are more likely to engage in their

college experiences than are their non-Hispanic peers, but are less likely to achieve; (H2) Hispanic immigrants are more likely than their native peers to experience obstacles that may affect negatively their educational attainment; and (H3) variations within the Hispanic population influence educational attainment whereby Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and Chicanos experience and achieve significantly lower than do Cubans – in fact, Cubans are most comparable to whites in terms of educational attainment. Although less likely than their upper-middle class white peers, upper-middle class Hispanic students are more likely than their lower-income counterparts to achieve academically. Finally, (H4), the Hispanic culture is about collaboration and relationships, both of which can influence Hispanic students' educational experiences and outcomes.

IV. Limitations of this Review.

There are multiple limitations to this review of research and literature. First, the hypotheses were not fully explored as a result of the limited available research and literature. Second, this review was not exclusive to Hispanic students in community colleges, also a result of limited information available. Third, information highlighted from *CCSSE* student interviews was exclusive to Hispanic females – there were no Hispanic males, and there were only two colleges represented.

CHAPTER 3, FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

This chapter describes the framework, methods, and procedures that were used to examine highly-engaging institutions and successful Hispanic students' experiences. The following are included in this chapter:

- Definition of terms;
- Framework;
- Questions;
- Population and sample of the study – colleges and students;
- Research design and procedures;
- Instrumentation;
- Data collection procedures;
- Data analysis procedures;
- Assumptions; and
- Timeline.

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this paper, the term, ***Hispanic students*** is used to characterize students who are Latino, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican. The term, ***Hispanic-Serving Institutions***, is used interchangeably with ***Hispanic-serving community colleges***, and these institutions are designated accordingly by the Federal Government. Institutions are designated as Hispanic-serving if Hispanic enrollments reach, or exceed, 25% of full-time equivalent undergraduate enrollment and if not less than 50% of the Hispanic students enrolled are low-income individuals (NCES; Excelencia in Education website). The term, ***Highly-***

Engaging, High-Percent Hispanic Enrollment Colleges refers to colleges that participated in *CCSSE* 2007, were identified as high-performing based on their higher-than-average scores on three or more *CCSSE* benchmarks by size category, and have student enrollments that are at least 35% Hispanic.

Student Engagement refers to what students do – the time and energy they invest in purposeful activities, experiences, and relationships. **Student engagement** also is about what institutions do – the intentional allocation of resources, organization of learning opportunities and services that are designed purposefully to engage students (*CCSSE* website; Kuh, 2005). **Promising practices and programs** are defined as such based on their association with relatively high levels of student engagement in particular *CCSSE* benchmark areas.

For the purposes of this paper, **educational attainment gap** refers to differences between the educational degree attainment for students by race and ethnicity; it also includes disparities between percentages and numbers of Hispanic students who enroll in higher education as compared to those who earn degrees. **Educational pipeline** refers to different points in the educational system in which students either persist or withdraw; the pipeline begins with completion of elementary school, then high school, college, and graduate school – it ends with completion of a doctorate.

II. FRAMEWORK

The research design and procedures are developed to describe the study and its context, determine the selected multi-method research design, identify the

population and sample selection, and describe the process for individual interviews.

III. QUESTIONS

The researcher uses this paper to explore the following three questions:

1. What is it about high-performing, high-percent Hispanic enrollment colleges that promote high-levels of student engagement?
2. In what ways – programs, practices, services, cultures – do institutions engage Hispanic students toward the types of activities, experiences, and relationships that promote student success?
3. What are the experiences and relationships in which Hispanic students invest that support their engagement and success?

The objective of this work was to elicit information from colleges and students that helped to illuminate these colleges' *CCSSE* benchmark scores and offer examination of Hispanic student success.

IV. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

High-performing, high-percent Hispanic enrollment colleges are identified as such by the following criteria:

- High-Hispanic enrollments (35% Hispanic or higher), as indicated by the U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) Spring, 2005 survey (<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minorityinst-list-hisp-tab.html>); and

- Colleges that participated in *CCSSE* 2007 and scored higher than average on at least three of the five *CCSSE* benchmarks of effective educational practice, by size category, as available in the 2007 *CCSSE* cohort data.

With that, eight colleges (out of 279 *CCSSE* member colleges in 2007) by percent Hispanic enrollment, across six states, follow below in Table 3:

Table 3: College by State and Hispanic Enrollment	State	IPEDS	Hispanic students %	Achieving the Dream/HACU/SSPIRE
CUNY-LaGuardia Community College	NY	13489	36.24	
Taft College	CA	8466	37.88	SSPIRE
West Hills Community College District	CA	4842	47.65	HACU
City College of Chicago-Richard J. Daley College	IL	9977	62.8	HACU
Miami Dade College	FL	54169	63.61	HACU
NMSU-Dona Ana Community College	NM	6570	64.47	AtD, HACU
El Paso Community College	TX	26667	85.7	AtD, HACU
South Texas College	TX	16233	95.32	AtD, HACU

And these colleges scored higher-than-average on three of the five *CCSSE* benchmarks, with the mean score for the national population of 50, as follows in

Table 4:

Table 4, Colleges by CCSSE Benchmark	NMSU- Dona Ana Community College (NM)	West Hills Community College (CA)	Taft College (CA)	CUNY- LaGuardia Community College (NY)	City College of Chicago- Richard J. Daley College (IL)	South Texas College (TX)	El Paso Community College (TX)	Miami Dade College (FL)
Active and Collaborative Learning	55.2	56.3	56.8		54.9	59.4	55.7	56.7
Student Effort	55.6	56.1		60.4	58.3	57	54.7	55.4
Student- Faculty Interaction	57.6		56.2					54.0
Academic Challenge			54.7	58.1	57.2	54.4		55.8
Support for Learners	56.8	56.0	64.5	56.4		59.5	57.1	54.9

Informed by the relevant research and literature on variations in Hispanic populations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; Solorzano et. al., 2005), this study focused on a sample of colleges that serve primarily Mexican-American students, those who are among the most at-risk and typically enrolled in colleges in the border states of California, New Mexico, and Texas. Accordingly, the author invited participation from Taft College (CA), West Hills Community College (CA), NMSU-Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM), El Paso Community College (TX), and South Texas College (TX). Those colleges were asked to submit systematic descriptions of promising practices and programs as related to the CCSSE Benchmarks on which they scored above average. From there, the author reviewed those descriptions and organized them into themes.

To further illuminate the student experience, the author conducted telephone interviews with Hispanic students – those who graduated in fall, 2007 or spring, 2008 or are scheduled to graduate, earn a certificate, or transfer in the

fall, 2008. Selecting “successful” students from these terms may support the ability to generalize the findings to other Hispanic students who likewise achieve in those terms. Interviewing students currently enrolled at their respective colleges, rather than those who have graduated or transferred, supported the researcher’s ability to reach those students.

Participating colleges were asked to identify and provide contact information for five Hispanic students who fit the following criteria:

- Graduate, earn a certificate, or transfer to a four-year institution by fall, 2007, spring or fall, 2008;
- English-speaking students; and
- 18 years and older.

When selecting students, colleges were asked to include, as possible, Hispanic students with varied educational backgrounds and experiences such as liberal arts and technical education majors and developmental education and ESL completers. To support the potential opportunity for generalizations, those students with demographic characteristics that match their colleges’ populations will be interviewed.

With that, student demographic information from colleges, as referenced on the *CCSSE* website follows in Table 5:

Table 5, Student Demographics	<u>NMSU-Dona Ana Community College (NM)</u>		<u>West Hills Community College (CA)</u>		<u>Taft College (CA)</u>		<u>South Texas College (TX)</u>		<u>El Paso Community College (TX)</u>	
<i>Student Characteristics</i>	Survey Respondents	All DACC Students	Survey Respondents	All WHCC Students	Survey Respondents	All TC Students	Survey Respondents	All STC Students	Survey Respondents	All EPCC Students
Enrollment Status										
Full-time students	68%	34%	73%	45%	73%	45%	71%	38%	68%	40%
Part-time students	32%	66%	27%	55%	27%	55%	29%	62%	32%	60%
Gender										
Male	39%	42%	40%	39%	40%	39%	42%	41%	37%	39%
Female	61%	58%	60%	61%	60%	61%	58%	59%	63%	61%
Race/Ethnicity										
Black or African American, Non-Hispanic	2%	3%	6%	7%	6%	7%	0%	0%	2%	3%
White, Non-Hispanic	20%	20%	27%	35%	27%	35%	3%	3%	7%	8%
Hispanic, Latino, Spanish	69%	64%	51%	43%	51%	43%	93%	95%	85%	85%
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	2%	1%	10%	7%	10%	7%	2%	1%	2%	1%
American Indian or other Native American	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Other	4%	10%	5%	5%	5%	5%	1%	0%	4%	0%

V. RESEARCH AND DESIGN PROCEDURES

This is a multi-method research design. Highly-engaging colleges were identified based on quantitative measures. According the *CCSSE* website, the five *CCSSE* benchmarks are groups of related items that address areas of student engagement. To enable benchmarking, *CCSSE* staff use colleges' course data files to extract from them random samples that are stratified by time of day; students in the selected courses complete the survey. The benchmarks are active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners. Each college that participates in

CCSSE has a score for each benchmark; college benchmark scores are computed by averaging the scores on survey items that comprise each benchmark. Benchmarks are standardized so that each mean – the average of all participating students – is 50 and the standard deviation is 25. Highly-engaging colleges were selected as a result of their participation in *CCSSE* 2007 and their higher-than-average scores by size category on at least three of the five *CCSSE* benchmarks. From there, the researcher investigated colleges' IPEDS data to identify high-percent Hispanic enrollments, particularly those with Hispanic enrollments of 35% or greater. The five colleges located in the border states of CA, NM, and TX were invited to participate in this study. Aside from full-time/part-time enrollment status, colleges' student demographics and survey respondents for those colleges showed similar patterns.

While the colleges' *CCSSE* benchmark scores provide valuable information about student engagement, this study included the qualitative method of document analysis to examine how colleges describe and evaluate programs and practices that are associated with relatively high scores on *CCSSE* benchmarks. The qualitative method of interviewing was employed to illuminate the quantitative data and make known these students' voices and experiences. This mixed-method approach enabled the researcher to examine institutional practices and student behaviors more fully than would a single-study approach (Mertins, 2005).

VI. COLLEGE DESCRIPTIONS AND STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Presidents from the selected colleges were be contacted by email and telephone to request their support for and participation in this work. In particular, they received the following email message on September 5, 2007:

Dear, President (insert last name) -

My name is Christine McLean, and I serve as the College Relations Coordinator for the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) and a doctoral candidate in the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin.

Congratulations, once again, on your college's high scores on the following *CCSSE* benchmarks, as compared to other colleges in its size category: (insert applicable benchmarks). The purpose of this email message is to request your college's participation in my investigation of highly-engaging, high-percent Hispanic enrollment colleges and their Hispanic students. Along with seven other colleges across the nation, your college has been selected for this work because of its high-performance on the 2007 *CCSSE* benchmarks and its high-percent enrollment of Hispanic students.

By collecting stories from colleges and interviewing by telephone some of their Hispanic students, I plan to identify what it is about these institutions

and their students' experiences that promote Hispanic student engagement, learning, and persistence. That is, I plan to illuminate your college's *CCSSE* results by capturing your college's stories and your students' voices.

I request your college's involvement in two ways:

- First, please share with me stories of promising practices and programs as they relate to your high-scores on *CCSSE* benchmarks – the attached ***College Highlights*** document serves as a guide for what I hope you will share in these stories. Please submit your stories and the names and contact information of the people who wrote those stories by email attachment on or before **October 15, 2007**.
- Second, also on or before **October 15, 2007**, please share with me the names and contact information for five Hispanic students who fit the attached **Hispanic student Interview Criteria**. Telephone interviews will be conducted in November, 2007, and I have attached for your review the ***Telephone Interview Script***.

Information provided by your college and collected from your Hispanic students will be used to inform my dissertation. If your college would like to join with me in this endeavor, I ask for your written response by

completing and returning by fax the following documents on or before

October 1, 2007:

- To follow the University of Texas at Austin's IRB requirements, please complete and return by fax the attached **Participation Agreement Form**.
- To inform the field of these findings, I would like to share with *CCSSE* information which may be reproduced in *CCSSE* publications and materials. Accordingly, please also complete and return the attached **Institutional Authorization Form**.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kindest Regards,

Christine McLean

VII. INSTRUMENTATION

As mentioned in that email message, two attachments were provided.

They are the ***College Highlights*** document and the ***Telephone Interview Script***. The ***College Highlights*** document requests information from colleges on the following:

- Describe in 500 words or less your college programs and practices that help to illuminate your college's *CCSSE* benchmark scores. For example, a college might rally a few faculty to share a story about how they

designed a student success course to facilitate active and collaborative learning; included in that story will be evidence of effectiveness – ways in which faculty assessed quality and quantity of collaborative efforts as a result of this course design.

- Describe in 500 words or less your college programs and practices that enhance Hispanic student engagement, learning, and student retention (along with data documenting the effectiveness of these approaches). For example, a college might discuss its Title V program and how from that program it has developed tutoring services that are targeted to assist first-generation Hispanic students; again, this story should include evidence of effectiveness.

Below are a few questions that can help to guide these stories:

- What is the purpose of this program or service?
- Which *CCSSE* benchmark does this program or service illuminate? Are there specific items within this *CCSSE* benchmark on which this story focuses; if so, which ones?
- Who are the key players in this program or service, and what are their roles?
- What is it about this program or service that contributes to its effectiveness? What evidence do you have to support this?
- What is it about this program or service that supports Hispanic student engagement, learning, and/or retention?

- What makes this program or service differ from similar efforts at other colleges – why is it special?
- What key lessons have your college learned through this work?
- What are future programs or services on which your college will focus to improve Hispanic student engagement, learning, and/or retention?

The **Telephone Interview Script** is designed to elicit from successful Hispanic students stories about their backgrounds and college experiences. In particular, the following purposes are informed by the literature and align with the MetLife Foundation Initiative on Student Success' Retention Toolkit on focus group interviews (<http://www.ccsse.org/retention/toolkit.cfm>): identify risk factors; ascertain purpose for pursuing higher education; illuminate how students perceive the college encourages them and supports their needs; and highlight programs, services, or relationships that both promote and hinder student success.

Open-ended questions will be asked to prompt students' thinking about their college environments, experiences, and relationships. Students will be asked any or all of the following, and in order by which they best flow in the conversation:

- Background information
 - What is your name? What is your age?
 - Who do you live with?
 - Do you have children; if so, how many and what are their ages?

- For how long has your family lived in the United States? What is your Hispanic origin? Are you an International Student?
- What is the highest level of education completed by your parents? What about your close friends and other family members – what has been their experiences, if any, with college?
- Do you work; if so, where and how often?
- When you first enrolled in the community college, did you feel prepared academically?
- What was your primary goal for attending and finishing college? Why did you choose a community college?
- Status
 - Have you graduated, earned a certificate, or transferred? If so, when? If not, when do you plan to graduate, complete a certificate, or transfer? How many credit hours did you complete/have you completed?
 - What is/was your major?
 - Did you complete any developmental or ESL courses; if so, how many?
 - Were/are you part-time or full-time?
 - What is your GPA?
- Experiences
 - Tell me what is it about your experiences in college that have helped you to be successful.

- Think about the person or persons who most motivated and influenced you while in college – what was it about them that helped to encourage you?
- Tell me about your typical day while attending college. How did you spend your time, on-campus and off-campus?
- What is your best memory of your college experience? What is your worst memory of your college experience?
- If you were to mentor another Hispanic student, what is it you would do, what would you say, how would you encourage to help this student be successful at your college?
- If you could change anything about your college experience, what would you change and why, and how would you change it?
- Did you ever think about leaving college; if so, what would have caused you to leave college?
- Describe your relationships with faculty and other students.
- Outcomes –
 - What are your future plans?
 - How has your college education helped you to achieve your goals?
 - How did your college prepare you for what you're doing now?

VIII. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Systematic examples and descriptions from colleges that highlight and provide evidence about practices and programs designed to promote Hispanic student success were reviewed, organized into themes, and analyzed. While

these examples and descriptions varied in scope, purpose, approach, and outcome, they fulfilled the criteria in the ***College Highlights*** document and focus on the applicable *CCSSE* benchmarks. As a result of lack of response from several colleges or inadequate information provided from colleges regarding their College Highlights, the researcher gained approval from Dr. Kay McClenney to interview specific college leaders by telephone; those telephone interviews included the questions available in the ***College Highlights*** form, and the researcher simply typed the conversations, verbatim.

These qualitative telephone interviews with the students were not highly structured; the researcher followed leads from the interviewees and asked clarifying questions to build a full understanding of students' experiences (Caudle, 1994); and, because of the nature of the interviews by telephone, the researcher listened carefully to the interviewees while taking notes of what they said. Many times, the researcher repeated back to the interviewees what they said, to ensure accuracy. During the interviews, the researcher typed what the students said and made notations of tone changes, pauses, sighs, etc. The scheduling of the interviews included an email invitation message to the students, providing brief background information on the researcher, purpose of the research, and possible questions that might come up during the interview. The researcher also informed the interviewees that the calls will not be structured, but tailored to their situation and contribution to the study (Caudle, 1994). Although notes will be taken during the interviews, full field notes were written up immediately following the calls. Notes were organized according to

student inputs, college experiences, and student outcomes and then by *CCSSE* benchmark, as applicable.

IX. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Caudle (1994) and Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest thoughtful analysis includes three steps: 1) data reduction, to narrow the collected data; 2) data display, to organize the data for analysis; and 3) conclusion drawing and verification. The purpose of data reduction was simply to categorize the information into themes and focused to fit the study – for example, information that does not support the research or its questions will not be analyzed. Data were organized to capture the most relevant data. Moreover, the researcher's experience with interviewing by telephone approximately 20 at-risk students in colleges across the nation in fall, 2005 helped prepare her for these telephone interviews for this treatise.

X. ASSUMPTIONS

Four assumptions underlie this paper. First, community colleges are the main vehicle by which Hispanic students enter higher education. Accordingly, this study assumes that community colleges are the institutions called to improve the educational attainment and engagement of Hispanic students. Second, the focus of this treatise is on issues pertaining to environments and experiences that contribute to the success of Hispanic students, but the author recognizes much of this discussion can apply similarly to African American students and students of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Third, community colleges, and

particularly high-percent Hispanic enrollment colleges, can improve and implement programs, practices, and policies to serve effectively Hispanic students – and, in doing so, also may improve services and outcomes for non-Hispanic students. Fourth and finally, the author assumes that improving student engagement in educationally purposeful activities also will improve other student success outcomes.

XI. LIMITATIONS

This is a “happy” study – it’s about effective colleges and successful students – while this research is designed for these purposes, there are some obvious limitations. Less-engaging colleges may do some of the same types of activities as those found in this study, but actualize different outcomes – this research would not answer the question about institutional differences regarding Hispanic student success between highly-engaging and other institutions. This study is limited to highly-engaging, high-percent Hispanic enrollment colleges and their students – this study does not capture successful Hispanic students at other institutions. This study does not include students who have not achieved to complete by fall 2007 or spring or fall 2008; accordingly, generalizations beyond these terms may be inappropriate. This study asked students to think about their entire college experience from entry point to current status; students’ recalling information from previous semesters may limit the richness of the data. Maybe a more appropriate title for this study should be, “Happily Engaged – Hispanic Colleges and Their Successful Students.”

The success of this method, as with all interviews, is dependent on the researcher's interviewing skills and abilities to listen, gently probe, and document students' experiences. While the researcher has some experience interviewing students by telephone, and telephone is the researcher's only method to reach students from each campus, the telephone does not enable the researcher to see students' facial expressions or hand-cues. The researcher is a white female, so there are limitations to the depth of her understanding of Hispanic culture.

Finally, this study highlights "successful" Hispanic students – it does not compare successful Hispanic students with other successful students; nor does it compare successful Hispanic students with non-persisting Hispanic students.

XII. SUMMARY

This chapter included the methods and procedures that were used to conduct a multi-method study of five highly-engaging, high-percent Hispanic enrollment colleges across three states and up to five Hispanic students from each of those colleges. Included in this chapter was a discussion of the research design and procedures and information about the population. The following areas were addressed, in detail: definition of terms, framework, questions, population and sample of the study – colleges and students, research design and procedures, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, assumptions, and timeline.

CHAPTER 4, RESULTS

The researcher uses Chapter 4 to provide results and findings for the following questions:

1. In what ways – programs, practices, services – do institutions engage Hispanic students toward the types of activities, experiences, and relationships that promote student success?
2. What are the experiences and relationships in which Hispanic students invest that support their engagement and success?

Information from colleges – colleges' systematic descriptions and follow-up telephone interviews with college leaders – and “students' voices” via telephone interviews helped to illuminate these colleges' *CCSSE* benchmark scores and offered additional insights into Hispanic students' experiences.

Of the five colleges invited to participate in this study, the following four agreed to participate: 1) **Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM)**, 2) **El Paso Community College (TX)**, 3) **South Texas College (TX)**, and 4) **Taft College (CA)**. College presidents designated college contact persons who were asked to provide systematic descriptions of college practices and programs and a contact list of “successful” Hispanic students based on the criteria provided. College contacts provided information on student contacts from early April to late October, 2008. Some college contacts also provided written descriptions of colleges' practices and programs, though some of the submitted information was specific to programs and practices and incomplete in many cases. Accordingly, the researcher received approval from Dr. Kay McClenney to add the approach

of gathering colleges' descriptions by eliciting the information directly from college leaders, during telephone interviews. Telephone interviews were conducted with college leaders in order to gather information in the ***College Highlights*** document.

Student telephone interviews began in early April and ended in late October, 2008. A total of 20 telephone interviews with students from the four colleges were completed; themes emerged from detailed field notes. Two interviews were discarded because the researcher found out during the telephone conversations that the interviewee would not graduate until spring, 2010. Eighteen interviews were used for this research. Telephone interviews were approximately 30 minutes in length. Interviews remained anonymous, and have been referenced, following each excerpt by "College name student, interview date"; in cases where more than one student was interviewed on the same date, the reference shows, "College name student 2, interview date."

I. STUDENT INTERVIEWEES – WHO ARE THEY?

All students interviewed (total 18) were Hispanic, and 17 identified their Hispanic background as Mexican and one as Salvadorian; twelve completed their community college education by earning an Associate degree, certificate, or transfer by fall, 2008 – six were near completion, with the last transfer expected in January, 2009. Students ranged in age from 19 to 49, with an average age of 31.4. Thirteen were female and five male. One-third (six) had children living with them, and four of those had three or more children at home; two lived alone; and the others lived with parents and/or siblings. All spoke English, but there was

variation in English-speaking abilities and limits and uses of ranges in vocabulary.

Thirteen students were born in the United States and five in Mexico; nine of the students' fathers were born in the United States and nine born in Mexico; eight of the students' mothers were born in the United States and ten born in Mexico. A total of 17 parents were born in the United States and 19 born in Mexico.

Parents' educational attainment ranged from no education to Bachelor's degree – six students' fathers and six students' mothers either had no education or participated only in elementary education, with some departures as early as second grade; one father and one mother earned GEDs after minimal elementary education experience (third grade); five fathers and four mothers completed high school; three fathers and one mother took a couple of college classes; two fathers and two mother earned an Associate degree; and no fathers and three mothers earned a Bachelor's degree (one of those earned that degree in Mexico). Of the 36 parents, elementary education was the highest-level of education for 12 (35%); the GED for two (6%); high school for nine (27%); some college classes for four (12 %); Associate degree for four (12 %); Bachelor's degree for three (9%); two were unknown (6%). Eleven of the 12 parents who were born in Mexico had no formal education or only completed some elementary education with GED.

All students were asked their primary reason for enrolling in and wanting to finish college; 67% (12 students) responded with "career"; other responses

were “for my children,” “money,” “to earn an Associate’s degree,” “to help others,” and “to transfer.” When asked, “When you first enrolled in the community college, did you feel prepared academically?” eight responded, “no,” eight said, “yes,” and two did not respond.

Eleven (61%) completed one or more developmental math courses; four (22%) completed one or more English-as-a-second-language courses; two (11%) completed a developmental English course; four (22%) did not take any developmental or ESL courses. Of those 14 who completed developmental or ESL courses, eight (57%) completed two or more developmental and/or ESL courses.

Thirteen (72%) were full-time status; four were part-time (22%), and one had no response. Grade-point-averages ranged from 2.8 to 4.0, with the average at 3.25. Students’ academic majors ranged, and included the following: 3-nursing; 1-Pharmacy Technology; 1-civil engineering; 1-electronic technology; 1-technology management; 1-psychology; 1-social work; 1-Child Adolescence and Family Education; 1-family and counseling; 1-education; 1-English and secondary education; 2-business administration; 1-advertising graphics and design; 1-translator; and 1-interdisciplinary studies.

Sixteen students (89%) also were employed (14, or 78%, of those worked 20 or more hours per week and seven and 39% worked full-time), and 11 (61%) of those worked on-campus. Two were not employed, but were looking for jobs.

Student Inputs.

Community colleges are called to serve the students who walk through their open doors. Hispanic students bring to the college unique characteristics, one of which is the value and need for family support. When asked about who motivated them while in college, most Hispanic students responded that their families motivated them to persist – many referenced specific support from family or the need to serve as a role model to family. One college intentionally connected students and their families with the College before students arrived on campus for classes. **Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM)** started a Freshman Convocation in August, 2008 that included students' families.

Classes started on Thursday, and we had a Freshman Convocation the Saturday before. All new students and their families (2-3 people per person) were invited. We were so pleased with the results. It was an orientation from 8:30am-2pm, and we had 60-70 new students with their family members. They found it really useful to find out about the services we offered. The president and I made some comments; we had the tutor-center coordinator give information; and then they had lunch here and went to their individual divisions where they might be studying. The Business and Information Systems division made a presentation and showed student organizations and travels they had made in the past year – the Hospitality group learned about cruise hospitality when they went to the Carribean and the Business student organization went to Wall Street in New York (for a lot of our students, this is their first time on an airplane). These sessions got students excited about starting. And, it was an opportunity for parents to ask questions (telephone interview with college administrator, August 29, 2008).

That same administrator shared how the College served Hispanic parents and communicated with them in Spanish to inform them about the College and help alleviate their anxieties.

A lot of the students who came were our dual-credit students, and those parents had more anxiety than our regular students who graduated from high school; for these 16 and 17 year olds, every little thing was an anxiety – one parent said, ‘I have my doubts,’ so we had a conversation in Spanish. She was concerned about the schedule and not knowing which room her son would attend [the schedule said TBD]; she was able to ask the instructor in the break out session about the room location – this was something we would not have thought would have caused anxiety – we’re working on these kinds of things (telephone interview with college administrator, August 29, 2008).

An administrator at **El Paso Community College (TX)** indicated that the majority of its students are Hispanic. Accordingly, in almost every improvement strategy, the College focuses its efforts to support Hispanic students. The administrator shared the need to include Hispanic students’ families in the students’ college experience.

We just went through the Foundations of Excellence activity – it is run by Dr. John Gardner. He is helping institutions do a self-study and see how they are meeting the needs of entering and new students. We went through that recently, and I know that we looked from data from Excellencia in Education which deals with Mexican American and Chicano students. We are finding that it’s important to work with families, provide information on financial aid even before students come to college (telephone interview with college administrator, August 27, 2008).

Hispanic students also mentioned the importance of family support for their college education and success.

My sister already went to college and just finished her masters. My mother got her degree six years ago, and she was a single parent at the time; it was very hard for her to go to school, pay the bills, plus taking care of me and my sister. She always was like, “If I can do it, you can do it!” I don’t have kids or other responsibilities like my mom did, and I can do it-I can go to school, and I can achieve my goals (EPCC student, June 30, 2008).

Another student shared:

In the Hispanic culture, the family is extremely important. Your siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins – everyone is your family. To a Hispanic, you do everything for your family. Look at your family and see that if you get a good education now, you can get a good job and help support them. If you don't get an education and stay in that mediocre job, you'll stay in that position your whole life and not be able to help your family (EPCC student, July 25, 2008).

Hispanic families tend to support and sacrifice for those in their family who are pursuing college. One student shared, "...And my husband, because we have three boys, I know I have his support. With these summer courses, I'm here two days per week until 9pm. (STC student 2, July 18, 2008)."

II. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, STUDENT EXPERIENCES, STUDENT SUCCESS

The following part of this section is organized into five categories – the first five categories are organized by the *CCSSE* benchmarks: 1) Active and Collaborative Learning; 2) Student Effort; 3) Student-Faculty Interaction; 4) Academic Challenge; and 5) Support for Learners. Within the five benchmark categories, stories from colleges that scored higher-than-average on particular *CCSSE* benchmarks and students' stories about relationships have been highlighted throughout.

A. Active and Collaborative Learning

Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM), El Paso Community College (TX), South Texas College (TX), and Taft College (CA) scored higher-than-average on the Active and Collaborative Learning Benchmark. According to the *CCSSE* Web site, the Active and Collaborative Learning Benchmark is comprised of the following survey items:

During the current school year, how often have you...?

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project as a part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

Information from college examples and Hispanic students' experiences

illuminated some purposeful ways that Hispanic students engage actively and collaboratively. From college examples and student interviews for this

Benchmark, **Study Groups** and **Practical Experience** emerged as themes.

Study groups. Throughout the telephone conversations, many students discussed peer collaboration within the context of study groups. Nearly every conversation regarding study groups included some appreciation for relationships and friendships, and many included comments about the impact of study groups on their success. One student from DACC shared that effective study groups are those where you establish a connection with others who have some mutual comfort and trust – those who you feel comfortable asking questions, those who share mutual encouragement for each other.

It is really important to find people that you can work with, trust, and be good friends – that makes a difference in how you do in your classes. We found people we could study with – if you don't get something, or don't understand something, you're not embarrassed to ask; they don't make you feel dumb. It just makes a difference – the comfort-level there is with people you trust, they won't make you feel bad. We're there to help each other, not to compete with each other. If one of the girls who studies with me gets a higher grade than me, I'm glad for her. I know if I studied with them ("the Caucasian group"), I wouldn't feel comfortable because I wouldn't feel like I could ask questions. The group I study with, we can ask each other questions. Our groups were organized by the people we felt comfortable with – the Caucasian group would go smoke, and we'd go grab a burrito (DACCC student interview, April 7, 2008).

One student from **El Paso Community College (TX)** desired to learn from older students: “I like to take evening classes because there are some older people, and you learn from their experiences as well” (EPCC student, June 30, 2008). In fact, friendships and mentorship grew from study groups, even between younger and older students.

They (the older students) were friendly and funny. The one thing interesting is that the non-traditional students are motivating – they are focused like you wouldn’t believe; for example, there were two older students in my History class. One was a male trucker, and he told us how he wanted to get a business degree to get a better job so he could encourage his daughter to go further than he had. The other was a woman whose husband just left her; she has two kids, works two jobs, and kept a 4.0 GPA. She told me to be extremely focused; she went into a nursing degree. These people made me want to get on the ball, too (EPCC student, July 25, 2008).

Another student mentioned how engaging actively and collaboratively through friendships helped success.

The good friends I’m making there motivate me. They know they count on you, and I know I can count on them. We’re there because we want to be there. When we started college, there was a group of females and one male, so we got together because we had the same schedules. We had lunch every day together at the same table, eating, doing homework, talking as adults, and that’s something to really fill my day – to have those friendships to talk to other adults, another adult with your same goals (TC student, July 23, 2008).

One student from **South Texas College (TX)** explained how study groups supported important friendships and helpful employment connections.

Because it’s a technical degree, we had a lot of projects. When I wasn’t working, I kept in contact with the students and spent a lot of time with them. As much as I dislike the group projects, they were very interesting and gave me the opportunity to make new friends. I made important connections. I met people who worked with the City of Edinburg and the

City of McAllen. It opened up opportunities for new friends (STC student, July 18, 2008).

One student from **El Paso Community College (TX)** talked about a study group interaction that enabled one tutoring-friendship that supported learning.

Usually a (college) friend and I hang out at a coffee house, movies, or go bowling. All of my good friends, I've met at college. We've become really good friends. I met her during math class – she tutored me – she was such a good helper! That's the reason I passed – she would go further into detail or show me a different way of doing a problem (EPCC student 2, June 30, 2008).

Another student from **South Texas College (TX)** shared specifics about a study-group experience: “We would share information with each other, go over the information, and make sure we understood the questions” (STC student, July 31, 2008).

Several students shared practical experiences with and value in study groups. For example, one student from **South Texas College (TX)** explained the value of learning from each other and how study groups contribute to success. “We would get together and get a room at the library and study before class...we would get together with six people – they would have different strategies and would see problems differently than me, so we'd help each other. That was very helpful – it made me ace my tests” (STC student, July 24, 2008).

A student from **El Paso Community College (TX)** shared how helping to teach other students within a study group supported both group learning and developed critical thinking skills.

“In our Chemistry study groups, the study group started off with three of us...soon grew to six, and we'd meet at Barnes N Noble. Since I loved

Chemistry, I did well at it. In the study group, half of the time we were clueless, but sometimes I would understand better, so they would ask me to explain. I would explain with cartoon examples. It helped me a lot – if you have to teach something, it solidifies it in your mind and gives you a better grasp. I think that study group helped me to get an A in that class (EPCC student, July 25, 2008)."

Other students also mentioned that asking questions and teaching each other in a study group was useful – one shared, “I prefer studying in a group, so we can ask questions. If you can explain to someone else, it also helps you to remember it” (EPCC student 2, June 30, 2008). Several students also mentioned that they eat lunch on campus with other students, during which time they also would either study together or seek out tutoring.

Practical Experience. When Hispanic students talked about their active and collaborative learning, they often mentioned the value of practical experience. The ways in which students engaged with each other actively and collaboratively and their hands-on experiences, both within and beyond the classroom, were illuminated in the information shared by colleges and throughout student telephone interviews. One example of supporting student learning through practical experiences is the Students in Technology Services (STS) program at **El Paso Community College (TX)**; this program affords students opportunities to gain practical experience through specific employment opportunities, both in the College and nearby community.

Students who are employees of the College are trained in technology and work with our technicians. The students also work with faculty and other staff members and assist them with technical needs. They work in high schools and some local businesses, as part of their employment with the college (the college partners with the district, and the district pays their salary or the local business pays their salary). These students work 19

hours per week for the college. The program started off four years ago with 15 students, and now has 90 students. The participating students also get workshops and training throughout the semester in personal skills, customer service, and all basic training for work. This program is a model for other programs, including the Students in Culinary Services program. The culinary program had 6 students (four years ago) and now has 400 (telephone interview with EPCC college administrator, September 5, 2008).

Students seem to enjoy these types of practical learning opportunities.

One **Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM)** student talked about a sense of pride in gaining hands-on experience through a project called, "Opening the Doors."

I got a partnership opening with the City of Las Cruces and Dona Ana Community College – we're doing master plans for parks, surveying them all, and making master plans for the city. The students in that class will be able to do that "hands on" to be able to understand that career a little more. I opened that door – I went to Codes Enforcement and we all met. I take good pride in this because it opens up options for the community college (internships, summer employment, co-ops) and brings in funding for the community college (DACC student, April 5, 2008).

A student from **El Paso Community College (TX)** shared about the value of practical experience, team work, and investing in the local community.

With my career, I basically want to help people and make a difference – seeing my professor has motivated me to do that. She's so much more than a professor. She started a program called, "Team Survival." She goes to different middle schools in El Paso, takes college students with her, and we talk to them about different topics – issues like growing up, puberty, sex, drugs, and we try to influence them in a good way. We've read about these issues, but she gave us a chance to reach out to the students who are going through these things. In the Team Survival class, we'd have study groups, where we would go and collect donations and give prizes to the middle school students – we would raffle stuff out. Sometimes we even have the media come (EPCC student 2, June 30, 2008).

This student further describes the instructor further: “My professor is very motivated and very energetic. She uses her energy to make a difference. She’s out there to care for others” (EPCC student 2, June 30, 2008).

Students believed so much in the value of practical experience that older students helped younger students learn practically about the ins and outs of college life.

I do that [mentor] already with the majority of our student body – the majority of our student body is Mexican. I have two out of 18 Anglos. All these people are freshman; they are young; they don’t like to guest speak; and they don’t like to do presentations. They see me getting involved. When I talk to these students, I take someone with me [to show them this is how it’s done]. I always am telling them, let’s go see about this opportunity, let’s go see what this will bring us (DACC student, April 5, 2008).

Experienced-students tended to reach out to inexperienced students, served as their role models, and helped support their practical experiences with the College environments. One student talks about how to teach students in the Hispanic culture about college life.

What we see in the Hispanic community – they [Hispanic students] are very shy, but they don’t know what’s available. They are hesitant to find out, so they don’t reach out. I will help a certain individual and they will tell their friends, and their friends will come to me, and I will help them (DACC student, April 5, 2008).

In addition to study groups, another example of an intentional strategy designed to engage students to work together actively and collaboratively is service learning. A college administrator at **El Paso Community College (TX)**, shares how service learning helps to promote learning, actively and collaboratively, and encourages students’ involvement in their communities.

Service Learning is another contributor for Active and Collaborative Learning. We have poured resources into Service Learning. In the past year, we have increased faculty (from 34 to 57) that have Service Learning as a part of their coursework. The number of students increased from 506 to 1162. The number of hours those students invested increased from 12699 to 26395. Some of the agencies they're working with are Abundant Living, Faith Center, Advocacy Center for Children of El Paso, American Red Cross, American Heart Association, elementary schools, aquatic center, recreation centers, and some city departments such as the fire department. There are 207 agencies involved (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

Colleges also intentionally require students' active and collaborative learning out-of-class, within the various college services. A college student success administrator at **El Paso Community College (TX)** tells,

We have a Student Success course that is required for all students who are going to be getting a transfer program (AA degree). The Student Success course is an active and collaborative class. Some examples of active learning include – students need to use the library, do research, they go through special orientation at the library; they are going to have activities that they need to work on in a group method; there is a lot of group-activity where they work together toward a particular problem or share information on a topic. Self-knowledge, personality assessment, career assessment, learning styles assessment – they have to work with others in learning what these different concepts mean. Included in that course are topics such as time management, study skills, and learning about all the college services (telephone interview with student success administrator, August 27, 2008).

Students also understand and value instructors' expectations for in-class interactions. One student from **El Paso Community College (TX)** shares about an instructor who showed expectations for student involvement in the classroom:

We were reading about the murders in Juarez – he had us write papers and do presentations – he wanted us to think about what was going on and talk about our opinions of what was going on. He wanted the students to be very open with him, and that's why I enjoyed it so much. He got everyone very involved – that's what I liked about the class (EPCC student, June 30, 2008).

Dona Ana Branch Community College's Sunland Park and Gadsden campuses, both of which are near the border to Mexico, include Hispanic enrollments over 90%. Following is a strategy example of Active and Collaborative Learning in developmental education:

All sections of developmental math at those two campuses are required to use Educo-Soft software which is a learning tool that allows students to go through and learn concepts and try out problems. Full- and part-time faculty teaching those courses are required to follow a prescribed structure of teaching that includes active and collaborative learning. The College is experimenting with what makes a difference in helping students to pass developmental math – so they don't drop out. An instructor is assigned to help other faculty to follow a model of teaching that includes 20 minutes of lecture and 20 minutes of peer collaboration. As additional support and opportunity for students to engage, peer tutors are placed in those classes. This is the second year of the program (telephone interview with college administrator, August 29, 2008).

B. Student Effort

Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM), El Paso Community College (TX), and South Texas College (TX) scored higher-than-average on the Student Effort Benchmark. According to the *CCSSE* Web site, survey items within the Student Effort Benchmark follow below:

During the current school year, how often have you...?

- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
- Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Come to class without completing readings or assignments
- Used peer or other tutoring services
- Used skill labs
- Used a computer lab

During the current school year...?

- How many books did you read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment
- How many hours did you spend in a typical week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, or other activities related to your program)

Two themes emerged within the Student Effort benchmark: 1) **Discipline and Perseverance** and 2) **Encouragement**.

Discipline and Perseverance. Discipline and hard work are important to student success – even within peer relationships, students called each other to practice discipline and exert effort. Several students talked about how discipline and hard work supported perseverance.

Group work was a bad experience when the other group members didn't do their work. That has only happened two or three times. You establish your group and get everyone's number. I had a group project that I had to do myself and went to the teacher about it. My teacher eventually did communicate to the whole class, didn't point out to anyone, gave us an evaluation of our groups and about how we felt, and I was honest about that (group). There were no fingers pointed, but my group members realized they needed to step up, and it got better after that (DACC student).

Another student shared about the need to exert effort and seek out the assistance necessary to succeed. This student shared multiple strategies for putting for effort that supported course completion and academic persistence.

With my math, I do go to tutoring as much as I can before class. If not, I'll get together with someone from math class to get help. If there is group work in classes, then I'll call people in the group to talk about our work or we'll meet before class (EPCC student, June 30, 2008).

Attending regularly and not missing class was another example of discipline and perseverance. Multiple students shared that going to class, without missing, and being on-time for classes were necessary for success. One

student shared some simple strategies for success, “Showing up to class – I go to school every day. Be on time, go to class, do your homework, pay attention to the professor, if you don’t understand – go back and ask questions, take notes, be on task with everything. I do what I have to in order to get the work done” (EPCC student, July 24, 2008). Another student repeated the importance of regular attendance. “Going to school every day really helped. On the few days I was absent, I felt like I was missing something. Go to school, learn, get motivated in order to go to school, learn, and get motivated. Again, going everyday was helpful (EPCC student, July 3, 2008).” A student from **South Texas College (TX)** shared how discipline and perseverance would support Hispanic student success. The student would encourage other students by telling them not to quit: “Tell them that even if they go part-time, don’t quit. It’s harder to return than to start...Don’t stop until you’re done... Maybe you had a goal to finish in four years, but it’s okay if you finish in six or in eight – as long as you finish (STC student 2, July 18, 2008).”

One student from **South Texas College (TX)** shared how preparation, study, and discipline helped support success. “In order to be successful, I had to be prepared. Being prepared was the thing. I had to prepare myself – if there was a test, I had to be one step ahead of the syllabus. I practically had no life, I would just study; I would study until late at night; I would wake up early and study. I always wanted to be a week ahead of my class (STC student, July 24, 2008).” That student mentioned how time management for success required the need to be an entire week ahead of the course syllabus. Another student from

South Texas College (TX) also talked about student effort and time management: “As long as they [students] can do time management, anything is possible. When you work, you work; when you play, you play; and when you study, you study. For every one hour of class time, you should have two hours of study time (STC student, July 31, 2008).” A student from **Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM)** offered a specific strategy for time management that supported success:

I have a daily planner that the community college lets us have for free, and I do use it because I have so many things going on – it helps me to keep track of things, I have so many things going on, so it helps me to check those notes before my day begins (DACC student 2, April 7, 2008).

Encouragement. Within the Student Effort benchmark, students were encouraged and motivated by peers, faculty, and staff.

I’m a mentor/tutor. We have to have a good attitude so that they will even register for classes and not get discouraged. The students go to tutoring there because they’re either weak in reading or writing. All the students are Hispanic, and I just push them and tell them to give it their all. Otherwise, they can get discouraged. I tell them, if they fall down, just to get back up again. I relate it to high school; in high school, there’s a punishment for not turning things in. In college, teachers don’t baby-sit you to turn in assignments. I tell them to act like it’s high school, and they’ll get punished if they don’t turn it in (EPCC student 2, June 30, 2008).

Another student mentor shared about the need to put forth effort when talking about mentoring other students:

I would try to find out who they are, what they do, what they like and don’t like, what they have problems with. I’d try to help them to trust me. Without trust, it’s hard to show someone something that is beneficial for them. I would have to encourage them to trust me. I would tell them about myself and so hopefully they would tell me about themselves. I would tell them to go to class everyday. If you don’t understand something, you need to ask the instructor. If the instructor doesn’t want to explain it in class, then you have to look for the instructor until you get the

answer. If you cannot reach the instructor, then go to a tutor so you would see a different way of doing something. And do your homework (EPCC student, July 3, 2008).

Faculty also encourage and motivate students to exert themselves academically. The following student shares an example of how faculty encouragement can motivate effort. “They (faculty) call me an overachiever. It makes me try harder – I didn’t want to let anybody down. I put a lot of effort in and never missed a class. I wanted to make sure they knew that I appreciated the opportunity I had been given. I didn’t want to let them down (STC student, July 18, 2008).” One student from Taft College (CA), shared how faculty expectations encouraged student effort:

They [faculty] expect you to do your homework, pay attention, and participate in the class...giving him or her feedback from what you studied and what he or she is teaching the class. I think what they expect is [us] to be responsible and to assume that [we] are in college; [we]’re not in high school anymore – [we] need to take that attitude of responsible (TC student, October 24, 2008).

An instructor at **Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM)** made a presentation regarding effective developmental education at the College’s professional development day.

The instructor presented on how faculty can enable developmental education students to put forth effort and do really well in courses such as History. The instructor shared the need to connect the students to the College by bringing in people from the library to give the students information about the resources and library web portal, with focus on their specific assignments. The instructor also commented that bringing these additional resources to the students will help them understand better how to accomplish and complete assignments. The instructor modeled by sharing the practical experience of giving students assignments and providing them with the support services and resources that will help them to work harder than they thought they could.

From all this, the instructor requested the implementation of a paired course, with an instructor who teaches the second level of developmental English and his History class. Faculty are working together to help students be successful in both classes. The College will start this paired course in the spring, 2009 (telephone interview with college administrator, August 29, 2008).

C. Academic Challenge

Taft College (CA) and **South Texas College (STC)** scored higher-than-average on the Academic Challenge Benchmark. The Academic Challenge Benchmark includes the following survey items:

During the current school year, how often have you...?

- Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations

How much does your coursework at this college emphasize...?

- Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
- Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways
- Making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods
- Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Using information you have read or heard to perform a new skill

During the current school year...?

- How many assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings did you read
- How many papers or reports of any length did you write
- To what extent have your examinations challenged you to do your best work

How much does this college emphasize...?

- Encouraging you to spend significant amounts of time studying

Critical thinking and **uses of new skills** were themes that emerged in the Academic Challenge benchmark. When students think critically and apply new information, they learn at deeper levels than if they simply memorize. One student shared about changes in thinking as a result of college courses:

My knowledge that I attain going through different courses has increased. My point of view has changed. I took some philosophy classes, and they made me think more – they pushed me to think about different situations and different things. You have to be really open minded. The courses increased what I know (EPCC student 2, June 30, 2008).

Another student discussed how a research project in one course increased skills in other courses.

There was a project for one of my English classes. It was fun, and I learned about how to write research. I was surprised by the findings. I did it on ESL in the US. I was expecting the ESL program to be successful, and I found out that it wasn't really successful in the research I did. Doing that project made me feel more comfortable to do research in all my other classes (EPCC student, July 3, 2008).

Academic challenge, requiring students to think critically and express creativity, also can support enjoyment of reading. One student from **South Texas College (TX)** shared:

My literature instructor would make us write poems and short stories, and that really helped me with my writing and imagination. I wrote some crazy stories and poems, and that really expanded my mind. Back then, I never liked to read; now, whenever I have a chance, I'll just stop and read a book or something (STC student, July 31, 2008).

Faculty who teach developmental courses also challenge students academically. “I took one developmental math course. It was good. The teacher I had was very challenging. The way he taught Algebra was like no other

teacher. He taught a lot with online things and also taught me how to use Excel (DACC student, April 6, 2008).”

An administrator from **El Paso Community Colleges (TX)** shares how the College has encouraged student effort by providing academically challenging opportunities in their science department.

We have a RISE program; it's a science program, coming out of the biology department. They have grants from the National Science Foundation to be able to show biology models in 3D. Students in that program have competed nationally and won a lot of awards and significant honors. The students help faculty with publications, also (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

The RISE program teaches and challenges students academically, but the connection with external organizations helps enable academic competition and further challenge.

D. Student-Faculty Interaction

Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM) and Taft College (TC) scored higher-than-average on the Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark. The Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark comprises multiple survey items on students' interaction with faculty. The survey questions follow:

During the current school year, how often have you...?

- Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor
- Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class

- Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance
- Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework

Within this Benchmark, **Mentorship and Encouragement** emerged as themes.

While the Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark focuses on students and faculty, students often shared about both faculty and staff mentorship and encouragement.

Colleges purposefully designed programs and practices that enabled faculty and staff and other students to intentionally engage with students. For example, **South Texas College (TX)** employs the Comprehensive Student Advising system as a way to intentionally mentor students. A college administrator indicated that this advising system is a case-management approach to student advisement; it incorporates cross-divisional strategies and resources to ensure student engagement through a multiple pronged approach to student advising.

The system connects every student to the college through a faculty member, advisor, mentor, or counselor. The Student Advisement Modules include the following:

- *South Texas College Beacon Mentoring Program: Full-time staff members are assigned to high enrollment/ high risk 'gatekeeper' courses and serve as mentors to facilitate student success.*
- *South Texas College Faculty/Staff Training Program: Utilizing NACADA advising training modules to train and certify over 400 faculty and over 100 staff to serve all students as mentors/advisors.*
- *South Texas College Case Management Program: Professional advisors are assigned to FTIC students with a minimum of four semester contacts to facilitate student success.*

These mentoring and training programs prepare mentors and allow for the intentional engagement of students through advising and mentoring (STC administrator, email correspondence April 14, 2008).

One student from **Taft College (CA)** discussed intentional engagement and faculty encouragement. The student talked about a small study-group/forum in which students and faculty were invited and shared:

It was a safe place for students to make comments and for faculty to offer feedback. I did have very good friendships with a lot of people. One friend is a mother of four kids, and she is very picky about doing good work. Our study group went to her house, made food and ate, and talked. It was like we had every week meeting with the program and in that meeting you could say anything you want, 'I don't like this or that.' In those meetings, the teachers can go to the meetings, and the teachers will hear the students talking about what's not working. That was one of the things that made me more confident – because the teachers heard us. When you first start, and you don't know English, you're afraid to ask, afraid to fail, afraid that something is wrong, but too scared to tell the teachers. In those meetings, the teachers listened and talked. They told us, for example, there was a student who was always late – they told us it's very important to be on time. Another example was office hours – they told us to come and talk to them in their offices (TCstudent, July 22, 2008).

Various other students also talked about the faculty encouragement and support. Some responses included practical examples how faculty encouraged students while other responses offered students' perceptions of faculty support in character, personality, and tone. One student shared, "My boss and a college dean encouraged me. He's such a nice guy. He encourages me to continue and finish what I've started 15 years ago. He's always encouraging me to take classes and finish (STC student 2, July 18, 2008)."

Other students talked about faculty encouragement and related it to increased student effort. "The teachers here are very involved, very interested in helping the students. As long as they see you're trying, putting in effort, and show some interest, they will help you. It is a friendlier environment than it is at a university. They're open and willing to help (STC student, July 18, 2008)."

Another student shared comments about faculty encouragement and support as a direct result of increased student effort.

My Anatomy professor – he was very strict professor, and everyone always said he was hard and mean, but I’m used to that strictness. If he saw you doing your hardest, he would help you – he would bend over backward to help you more. Every time I see him, he tries to encourage me and gives me tips on how to learn something better. He even talked to my future professors – they were his friends, and he would tell them that I was a good student, so that I would get to know those professors (DACC student 2, April 5, 2008).

Students perceive when faculty care about them. One student shared that faculty alleviated her hesitations about how well she was doing and encouraged her to persist. “...the teachers’ faith that I would be successful. There were times when I was hesitant about how well I was doing, but they kept telling me I was doing very well and didn’t see any reason why I shouldn’t do well. I think they [teachers] care when you show them you care (EPCC student, July 3, 2008).” Another student told about how her instructor showed encouragement and excitement for her success.

My instructor is very supportive and very encouraging. He wants to get people into his bachelor’s program, and he wants them to succeed. You can talk to him about your classes and the instructors. I graduated in May, and in July, I started a new job – he is thrilled about that [her graduation and job]. He was so excited, and he asked me to help him promote his program. He is very good with students. All the faculty are the same way – to help you, to encourage you (STC student, July 18, 2008).

One student mentioned how one instructor encouraged academic pursuits beyond the Associate’s degree.

She is motivating and if there’s any problem, she’s a great person to go and talk to – if you have something with a class, she’ll help you or guide you on what you have to do. She has been there, she’s just amazing. Even if I go, ‘Oh my, I’m so nervous about this exam...’ She’s that person to go to. She’ll respond and tell me I can do it. She encourages me to go

for my masters or higher, for that higher education – she tells everyone this – not to just go for the Associates, to thrive higher because you’re capable of it. She’s very encouraging (DACC student interview, April 7, 2008).

Role models emerged as a sub-theme within the Mentorship and Encouragement theme. In many instances, students and colleges would comment specifically about the value of role models. A college administrator at Dona **Ana Branch Community Colleges (NM)** described encouraging students through role models and other support systems:

We always are pleased to have role models in faculty who are Hispanic. We have a Diversity Caucus for faculty and staff and a Diversity Committee that does events where different people and student organizations have booths. There is a Hispanic student organization, and that is very active – they present two or three programs during the year to include the cultures of Mexico and Spain. Flamingo dancers have performed and other dance programs from the NMSU (telephone interview with college administrator, August 29, 2008).

Students were encouraged by role models and those who reached out to them. “Well, I had this one teacher who had enthusiasm about what she was teaching. I wanted to be a future teacher, and I wanted be like her. She was always very positive and very encouraging with all of us (STC student, July 24, 2008).”

One student shared how two, Hispanic, women administrators and role models at **Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM)** encouraged students.

Both women are my role models: one is my advisor, works in the Student Success Center, and advises the Hispanic student Association, and the other is a college leader. I got to know them in my years as president of the Hispanic student Association. They are motivating. One just finished her doctorate; I admire that. She, being a woman with a doctorate degree, made herself competitive. The other is one of the first women leaders in the history of the community college; that has been an inspiration to me.

The two people who motivated me most are those two doctorates. Both of them are 'people persons'. They are not 'greater than thou,' sometimes you see that at the University – they are comfortable – they talk to you and see you as an individual. I feel like I'm somebody at the community college; they ask how I'm doing and how my classes are going (DACC student 2, April 7, 2008).

Another student discussed mentorship from an instructor/tutor coordinator, who also served as a role model.

It was my boss at the College. For several years, he was the tutor coordinator, and I saw a lot of integrity in him. He genuinely cared about the students. He shared his background and had a hard time while in college. He didn't like English, but now he's an English teacher. It was a day-to-day thing, observing him. Whenever we had meetings or one-on-one conversations, I gained that insight into his experience, observed him, and participated in work with him. I saw his integrity – what he said and did (DACC student, April 6, 2008).

“Smallness” of class size was another sub-theme that emerged within the Mentorship and Encouragement theme. For some students, the simplicity of small class sizes enables a personal connection between instructors and students.

What helped me out mostly was the teachers. The classes are always small – the most you will see in a classroom is 35, so you don't feel so isolated from the teachers. The teachers are most on a personal basis, they know your name and are willing to help you out. You're not a number there (EPCC student, July 25, 2008).

Another shared about the value of “small”:

It's almost heartbreaking to leave the community college because I've gotten used to it, and having to make a change from a comfortable environment – that comfort zone will have to be changed because I'm going into auditorium environments with more students. Some classes at NMSU, I'm not really in touch with the instructor. I feel close connections with the instructors at Dona Ana (DACC student 2, April 7, 2008).

Helpfulness. Helpfulness was another theme that emerged within the Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark. One student from El Paso Community College (TX) mentioned a general sense of helpfulness:

Everyone is very helpful. They are out there to help the students – that’s what I like about the community college. They let you know that we’re here to help you. They never make you feel intimidated (EPCC student, June 30, 2008).

Also in very practical ways, students explained how faculty helped their success. When asked who motivated or encouraged you to be successful in college, one student responded, “The reading instructor at the college helped me to get the job I have now; he’s always encouraging me; he opened up my eyes and made me realize that I wasn’t dumb and can do things, and I’m capable of doing things (EPCC student, June 30, 2008).” Similar comments were shared by students across campuses.

At the Branch, I like taking my classes there – the instructors want to help you, they give you tips, or they send you to the tutoring center; they take off time during class so a speaker from the tutoring center will come in and speak to you and give you information that they want to help you (DACC student 2, April 5, 2008).

Another student offered a specific example of faculty helpfulness during required office hours.

He taught me an education course, but he also teaches remedial English. He wasn’t just my instructor. He tried to find out more about me as a person. I think that’s helpful when teachers want to know more about you, not just a student, but the complete person. If they become interested in you, it motivates you to do well. In his class, it was required that we meet with him to discuss our writing assignments. That opened up an opportunity to get to know each other. The fact that it was a class requirement to talk with him one-on-one made it easier for me to get to know him and for him to get to know me (EPCC student, July 3, 2008).

Faculty helpfulness did not remain in the classroom. “They [the faculty] were friendly, easy to talk to, would help when you’re in a bind. The instructors here will give you their cell – ‘call me if you can’t come to class, so I can give you the assignment. They give you every opportunity to pass their classes (STC student, July 18, 2008).” Another student talked about helpfulness and access to instructors: “I took three remedial math classes. I had to take them – there was no choice, because I’m not very good in math. My teachers were awesome – they helped me out a lot; they were available before and after class with any questions I had regarding math problems; they would explain everything in detail (STC student, July 24, 2008).” Another student reported faculty helpfulness and availability during office hours:

One time in math, it was last semester, we were going to get ready for a test. I didn’t really understand something, one of the questions was really weird. I asked a professor to help, but he told me to stop by his office hours; he broke it down and helped to make it easier for me. I was surprised because most people don’t have time to help you. He showed me an easier way (EPCC student, July 24, 2008).

One **Taft College (CA)** student mentioned a preference for asking questions during office hours, as opposed to asking questions in the classroom:

They [faculty] tell you that they have office hours. If you don’t want to discuss questions in class, you can go to office hours. I go to office hours when I personally have a question that I don’t feel comfortable asking in the class. I think it’s better to talk to the instructor in their office than in class. I prefer office hours because they can provide you their [full]-attention (TC student, October 24, 2008).

Faculty can be helpful simply by hearing students’ thoughts and concerns and helping to resolve constraints.

One of the things that made me successful is the people who direct the programs help us a lot because we can complain; like the other day, I was complaining to the instructor because I took my first online class and I told her, 'you know what, your tutors don't help me; they are doing this and that, and they're not helpful.' She responded that she would talk to them. She is very helpful. Other people also at the college are very helpful, and it's because of those people that I have been successful (TC student, July 22, 2008).

One student mentioned helpfulness in terms of advocacy of Hispanic students.

When I felt, a group of us in my class felt the same, that there was favoritism among several students with one of our past instructors. The instructor provided her with a lot more resources to her than to us, she never mentioned to us these resources – she gave this student personal resources. Not there was any racism, but they were Caucasian girls. We wouldn't go to her office everyday, kissing up, but the other girls did. She was a Caucasian instructor, and the class of 32 was about 10-12 Caucasian and the rest Hispanic. I went to the student success administrator and told her that we felt cheated that since we weren't in her office all the time or kissing up that we felt we were being cheated, so the administrator wrote a letter to the instructor – she didn't mention names, but she mentioned that she felt there was favoritism and that we felt cheated. We heard that instructor and other girl had lunch together. The instructor wrote a letter back, explained her side, and said there was no favoritism. After the letter, her actions changed a little bit and it kind of stopped. It made me feel good since someone wrote her a letter and she thought twice...it made me feel good (DACC student interview, April 7, 2008).

Wisdom and Practical Experience. Within the Student-Faculty

Interaction Benchmark, students often shared that the benefits of gaining knowledge, wisdom, and practical experience from instructors supported their success. While Practical Experience emerged as a theme in Active and Collaborative Learning – students' interactions with each other, it also emerged as a theme in Student-Faculty Interaction – in relation to students' connections with faculty. For example, one student commented how a professor and advisor helped improve student learning.

A Civil Surveying professor and advisor took time out of his regular day of teaching and gave us a tutoring session. He is in that career that we are following. The things he tells us – he breaks them down, instead of giving lecture from a book; he will break it down so we can understand it, talk further on that topic, and help us to understand the material (DACC student, April 5, 2008).

Students gain wisdom and knowledge through experiential learning, one of which can be when an instructor connects course materials with practical learning.

My English class that I just finished taking this past semester. I really enjoyed it. Every time I went, it was a good class. He gave us a regular reading book... We got to meet the author of the book we were reading. He was very laid back with us – he always liked for us to talk about what we thought and our opinions. (EPCC student, June 30, 2008).

Some students bring practical work experience that relates to their learning. One student shared about connections with faculty as a result of practical, work experience: “I got to see a lot of the faculty and spend time with them. I had a lot of work experience, so I had a lot of suggestions (laughs). I was kind of familiar with the subjects, because I had jobs related to them (STC student, July 18, 2008).”

Faculty also encouraged students’ practical experience outside the classroom. For example, one student from **El Paso Community College (TX)** shared about Project Dream, a project designed to help students to raise their scores on the Accuplacer. “One of my teachers recommended me to go and help students, to pass on something you have learned. I really liked helping a lot” (EPCC student, July 24, 2008).

E. Support for Learners

Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM), El Paso Community College (TX), South Texas College (TX), and Taft College (CA) scored higher-than-average on the Support for Learners Benchmark. According to the *CCSSE* Web site, the Support for Learners Benchmark includes the following survey items:

How much does this college emphasize...?

- Providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college
- Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Helping you cope with your nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Providing the support you need to thrive socially
- Providing the financial support you need to afford your education

During the current school year, how often have you...?

- Used academic advising/planning services
- Used career counseling services

Within the Support for Learners Benchmark, various themes emerged including **Outreach, Support Services, English-as-a-Second Language and Developmental Education Courses**, and the **People**.

Student Support Services. One **El Paso Community College (TX)** student shared some strategies for helping other Hispanic students to succeed by pointing them directly to student support services.

Take advantage of the prep lab for math. If you don't like working with computers, go to the math tutoring center. Go to the writing center if you're having problems making your essays. Problems with conversational English – there are free classes there. Get informed – EPCC offers a lot to help you get prepared (EPCC student, July 25, 2008).

Another student from **Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM)** talked as if student support services were designed intentionally so that students could not avoid using them.

There's a lot of instructors who are dedicated to helping us. The student success center, resources, tutors from 8am to 6pm, and they really implement/remind us about the success center and tutors. They actually have the coordinator of the student success center go into the classes – I've had several classes where the coordinator goes into our class and tells us about the services, times, and lets us sign up for tutoring. They really do help with that. One very good thing about the community college is the tutoring – and, it's free. There are no appointments required, there's a walk-in basis (DACC student interview, April 7, 2008).

Various sub-themes emerged within this theme, including outreach, financial aid, advising, and tutoring. **Outreach** included reaching into the communities to recruit Hispanic students and reaching into the College to serve Hispanic students. One example of outreach is Taft College's CASA program. **Taft College (CA)** initiated a Hispanic serving center for recruitment and integration of potential students with limited experience in post-secondary education.

Taft College has implemented programs to support Hispanic students. The culture of unquestioning acceptance of authority has caused many students to terminate their academic path. Frequently, students believe themselves to be at fault or ineligible for programs or services when, in fact, one or two questions could clarify the situation and the student's needs met. This is where the Center for Academic Support and Assistance (CASA) excels.

All employees in the service center are Hispanic. The majority of the employees entered the United States as children. Although the hiring process was not focused towards a particular group, this coincidental outcome has had a positive impact on students. Students believe these employees 'understand' them and their experiences. Employees in the center act as cultural liaisons to the rest of the college community, frequently discovering and correcting misunderstandings based on differences in life experiences. Current students spread information

about CASA to friends, neighbors, and acquaintances who come to Taft College as 'the place where we are important'.

The following scenario typifies situations seen in CASA regularly. A young man was told he did not qualify for financial aid and could not attend college. When he told his parents the news, they brought him into CASA to 'fix it'. In the course of the conversation, the CASA employee found out the student had not asked why the aid was denied. The CASA employee contacted the financial aid office, discovered the student was in the records as being on dismissal from the college. Since the student had failed a college course while attending as a special admit student (still attending high school); the failed course could not be counted against financial aid. The student's records were corrected, financial aid was awarded, and the student enrolled in classes (TC college administrator, September 5, 2008).

One Taft College (CA) student shared how people at CASA encouraged student success:

The migrant program, CASA, is excellent. It helped me a lot. Many, many times there are frustrations because you don't know what to do. When I went to this office, they helped me; told me I was an excellent student; told me not to give up; told me even if I didn't pass the class not to worry because I could always re-take it. They told me to keep doing it, keep trying it. And, I didn't give up (TC student 2, October 24, 2008).

South Texas College (TX) also offered outreach programs.

The College has partnered with fifteen high schools in seven school districts to sponsor College Connections events that facilitate the financial aid and admissions process for all high school seniors. Each high school hosts the turnkey event which includes completion of the online admissions and financial aid applications as well as breakout sessions on topics such as college rigor and readiness, the more you learn the more you earn, financial literacy and Credit Smart and a college student panel. The college bound initiatives for schools targeted in a Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board grant also include free online ACCUPLACER remediation and assessment (STC administrator, email correspondence, April 14, 2008).

El Paso Community College (TX) also reached into its community and helped to prepare incoming students, specifically those with ESL and developmental education needs.

Our Summer Bridge Program helps students transition to college (it's open to anyone entering the college and to people who are transitioning from ESL to college-level courses), the whole idea of college knowledge. What we do, we have four hours per day for four weeks. We work on math, reading, and writing skills, but we also do the other affective development – why college is important, career inventory, we have them use the services of the PREP program; we have teachers who work with these students, mentors, and counselors who come into the program and help them to prepare for degree plans. That population of students has pretty good success rates as well with their math. They are able to skip some of the entry developmental classes, but they also come in strong because they know how to get about the college, navigate the website, use the services. Students report through focus groups that they have felt a sense of belonging to the institution. This is a small program – 180 students last summer and 130 this summer (telephone interview with college administrator, August 27, 2008).

An **El Paso Community College (TX)** student shared about a summer-orientation and preparatory program that specifically focused on assisting students with developmental/remedial and ESL needs.

We had a project there at the Office of Student Success – Project Dream. That summer was for students who barely graduated from high school – it was a one-month refresher course in reading, math, and writing to help them score higher on the Accuplacer, so they wouldn't have to take developmental courses (EPCC student, July 25, 2008).

That same student mentioned how this program served to celebrate student success and those who served these students.

The last day, we had a celebration for the students, after they took the class. A lot of them scored out of remedial reading and writing, so they were excited. They would announce each person's name, and the entire group would shout aloud with excitement. Then, they called me up, and

they went wild again. They shouted for each student who went up. They thanked me so much for helping them! (EPCC student, July 25, 2008).

Another student shared about the benefit of someone from the College reaching out into the community and encouraging college attendance.

When I was in high school, an instructor from the community college came to our high school. She was helping and tutoring me in reading. I was talking to her, and she inspired me to go to college because at first I didn't want to go. She gave me that extra push to go to college. Now, I see her at the college almost every other day (EPCC student, July 24, 2008).

Student Support Services. Students benefit from effective college services and programs provide students with academic support and development and career planning. The following includes colleges' services and practices related to registration, financial aid, and computer labs.

Registration. And yet, students' initial experiences with college were not limited to recruitment and outreach. One student at **South Texas College (TX)** mentioned helpfulness during the process of registration.

The first time I enrolled when I went to register – it was exciting because it was different from high school; everyone was busy doing their own thing. The dean walked over and asked me if he could help us in any way – he was very helpful, telling us what to do and where to go (STC student, July 24, 2008).

South Texas College (TX) worked to improve registration by eliminating late registration as a need to improve student persistence. The information includes not only the outcome of eliminating late registration, but also the process the college implemented in order to achieve those results.

The college continuously heard from faculty that allowing late registration was detrimental to student success and in addition faculty success rates were also being affected by this practice. The College would allow late registration through the 4th class day of a 16 week Fall or Spring term and through the 2nd class day of a 5 week summer term. This would account for about 4-5% of total enrollment, i.e. the last fall, Fall 2004, the College allowed late registration and had just over 800 students register during the first 4 days of class and ended up with a total enrollment of just over 17,100 students. After repeated faculty concerns were expressed, two College administrators reviewed the data on late registration. They started with those 800 students from Fall 2004 and looked at their payment habits and success rates during that fall term. They first noticed that over 15% of those students were dropped for non-payment versus about 5% of students who registered on time. Then they looked at GPAs for the late registrants, after the fall term and found that they were about 50-50 to be successful, when successful meant having a 2.0 or greater GPA for that fall term. However, they dug deeper and looked at grade distribution. They found that the on-time registrants were more likely to earn an A-C and late registrants were 2.5 times more likely to earn a "D, F, or W". This really made the difference.

They also looked at the day of registration and found that students that registered on the 3rd and 4th day of late registration performed very poorly. However, students who registered on the 1st and 2nd day of late registration performed better, but still not as well as on-time registrants. The College's plan was to approach the College decision makers and propose a phased approach to eliminating late registration over a 4 year plan; from 4 days to 3 days, 3 days to 2 days, 2 days to 1 day, and then eliminate it all together.

They then took the data to the Planning & Development Council which President chairs, all of the VPs serve on it along with the Academic Deans, some of Student Services administrators, other key administrators, and faculty leadership. As they discussed the data, the Dean of Nursing & Allied Health, which is where most of our selective programs are housed, spoke up and stated that Nursing & Allied Health would never allow late registration and so how could any other academic divisions allow this to occur? The momentum built at that meeting, and the College eliminated late registration all together.

The College attempted to launch a communication plan to students informing them that we would not allow late registration beginning Fall 2005. In addition, the College developed flex-schedule or mini-mester course offerings, i.e. classes that began 2 weeks after regular courses began. This would allow the College to hold up the elimination of late registration, but also maintain access, which is part of the College mission.

The College would inform students, "I'm sorry I can't register you for that course since the term all ready began but we have another session starting next Monday, which you can enroll in."

The timing was tight and students did not think the College was serious; therefore, there was an impact to Fall 2005 enrollment. The College ended up at 16,636, which was about a 3% drop. Over the course of the Fall, the College was able to get up to 16,800, via mini-mesters, which was ultimately a 2% drop. The Spring 2006 term was about the same, a 2% drop. This was in the best interest of the students. Students would adhere to the elimination of late registration in Fall 2006. The College rebounded with an 11% growth and an enrollment of 18,466 students for Fall 2006 and 17,700 students or a 7% growth for Spring 2007. The Fall 2007 enrollment reached 19,973 (an 8% growth) not to far off the target of 20,000 students for Fall 2007, again with no late registration. Incidentally, the College is now at 20,386 (a 10.4% increase) students with the mini-mesters, and without late registration.

The College's retention rates are currently at 65% for First-time full-time students and 58% for the total population, both steadily going up; however, both well short of the stated goals. The College also measured the success rates of the Fall 2004 late registrants, the last group that registered late, and checked to see if they did better when we forced them to register on time and they did perform well, actually at a statistically significant rate better.

Faculty were and continue to be very appreciative of this decision. However, they do ask to ensure that late registration is not occurring. The College carries late registration out very flexibly, i.e. if a student walks in on the first day of class say a Monday and wants to register for a course that does not begin until the next day or a Tuesday, then we allow that student to register for that class as it is not late. Students did not complain verbally, however that first term the enrollment drop spoke for them.

Bottom line, accomplishments were made, faculty and instructional leadership collaborated on the decision, and the College became one of few that has successfully eliminated late registration (STC administrator, email correspondence, April 14, 2008).

Financial Aid. More than half of Hispanic students identify lack of finances as a "likely" or "very likely" cause for them to leave college (CCSSE 2008 cohort data). One administrator **El Paso Community College (TX)**

discussed some creative ways **El Paso Community College (TX)** seeks aid and supports students.

We have a major push now for scholarships for students. We are one of the largest Pell Grant providers in Texas and close to the largest in the nation, so we push for scholarships. We have some unique ways of getting them. Every year, we have an Administrators' Leaders Luncheon, and it started off small within the college community – we go to the luncheon and the administrators (including Rhodes) waits on us, back massages, whatever to get tips. Last year, they raised \$79,000 for scholarships. We also are doing "Painted Pallets" Auction; our leadership academy, A. Pena comes and we have a painting with Pena session. Last year, we painted pallets and auctioned them off. We had local artists and others to paint, and last year we raised \$22,000 for scholarships. We have extended these now to include people outside of the college – the last two years, the money that was raised was for specific purposes; last year, there was a police officer killed in duty, and the police department cooperated with us. The scholarship was named for that officer, and we collected \$50,000. Scholarships are designated by type – journalism, business, art, those in criminal justice, military dependents, students who have demonstrated leadership capabilities. We have an award luncheon, and we try to get the person for whom the award is named to give the award to the students (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

One student from **Taft College (CA)** shared the need for financial support to attend college.

I'm enrolled in a program that pays for my units, books, and supplies – it helps me a lot, so I've taken advantage of that. I started two and a half years ago, and I only have 17 more units to finish (associates degree in liberal arts). I started in August, got my GED in December, and got my citizenship in March (TC student, July 22, 2008).

One wife and mother discussed how employment at **South Texas College (TX)** allowed for the opportunity to take courses.

I can speak for my own experience, it was family – my responsibilities as a mother and a wife (or finances) – my experience is special because I work

here at STC, and STC is wonderful enough that we take classes for free (our tuition is waived). I cannot imagine having to go to school and continue with the lifestyle I have or paying the bills – with tuition on top of that...(STC student 2, July 18, 2008).

That same student commented about the low-cost of community college education as compared to four-year institutions.

My advice would be to take one class or to budget for it – it's not as expensive here as some large universities – it's very affordable. (STC student 2, July 18, 2008).

Computer labs. Students often discuss the importance, value, and satisfaction with College computer labs (citation). A leader at **El Paso Community College (TX)** set up a policy for the computer lab to be state of the art. Every three years, the College brings in the latest equipment and take out that computer equipment – which goes into faculty or staff or department offices. The equipment that is taken out of those offices is moved to lower offices or refurbished and put out on a no-cost lease to agencies in the area that need computers. The students get the best equipment first. We also have a laptop check out program – they can check out a laptop for three hours, two days, over the weekend; many of our students don't have access to computers at home, so this is our way to help those students. We have 100 laptops for check out at each campus, 500 total.

English-as-a-Second Language and Developmental Education

Courses. Many of the Hispanic students interviewed had to complete ESL and/or developmental education courses, several of which did not count for credit, before they enrolled in for-credit courses: four took ESL courses; 11 took developmental math; and two took developmental English. **Taft College (CA)**

developed and implemented Project Gold for specific purposes to improve learning outcomes for students in ESL and developmental courses. A college administrator shared the need to invest in the Hispanic student population as a demographic shift in the past ten years whereby Taft and Taft College had been predominantly white. The student population increased to approximately 35% Hispanic, and the College responded to that shift.

Taft College's Project Gold is guided outcomes for learning development, part of the Title V program and designed by the institution to pilot as many changes multi-directional for faculty-student and institutional-student interactions. At the onset of the Project, there was an unacceptable 5% persistence in pre-collegiate classes and a major demographic change that included need for the implementation of ESL courses. Initially in that Project of 50 students, zero students with limited English speaking abilities persisted (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

Taft College (CA) designed block schedule course offerings to meet the academic and familial needs of ESL and Foundation (basic skills) students. Two cohort tracts were created to meet the needs of these students. A complimentary set of courses were designed for each tract to re-enforce skills taught in the individual courses. Students requested a start time that would ensure adequate time to drop off children at day care or school without being late to the first class of the day. Students attended classes from 8:40 am until 12 pm Monday through Friday with a required debriefing meeting held each Friday at noon. Courses included ESL reading, ESL writing, mathematics, computer skills, and social studies. Activities in the social studies course were designed specifically to force application of the skills learned in other courses.

Each semester, for four semesters, students enrolled into a block of courses sequenced to terminate at the associate degree level in mathematics and English. The timeframe remained the same, therefore, students did not have to readjust family and/or work schedules every few months. Students who were unable to successfully pass the courses due to pacing were shifted to part-time status, but maintained as a member of the cohort.

Cohesion among cohort members was developed and maintained through weekly 'debriefing' meetings facilitated by a counselor. Food was provided at these meetings, cohort instructors were required to attend, and a set format was followed: (a) students were asked, "What went well this week? What did not go well this week?", (b) instructors were asked the same questions, (c) general group question "What can Taft College do to assist you?", and (d) open floor discussion on any topic. These sessions provided a forum for the college to identify gaps in the knowledge base of students. Plans were then developed to bridge the students' knowledge and instructors' expectations of what students should know/do before entering the courses. For example, many students did not know how to use email, flash drives, save documents, or format papers using word processing applications. These skills, once identified, were embedded in the instructional offerings whenever possible.

These and other conversations also helped the College to understand Hispanic students' needs and goals:

There was an initial assumption that Hispanic students who came in would want vocational education. English-speaking students would be asked their interests and give them all their options – but this didn't happen with Hispanic students. When the ESL classes began, it was automatic to put

the Hispanic students in those translated courses...Now, we tell students, 'we will help you; we will support you; and we will help you with your classes, but you need to tell us what you really want.' We started getting feedback from them. As a result, we did not put translators in those other courses, but they are putting together ESL vocational classes – an entire field in the ESL pedagogy – medical terminology is ESL for medical terminology – so they learn English for that degree. This made students want to take ESL classes – they started seeing the value in learning English (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

Taft College (CA) now has 150 students in Project Gold, plus a waiting list. One requirement to join the Project is students' completion of financial aid applications; the Project provides a dictionary, calculator, textbook rentals, and parking permits.

As of the 5th semester of implementing ESL, the six ESL classes are full (30-35 students) and there's a waiting list...The students are smiling and bringing their friends to these courses; that is huge – when you talk to a student and they say they're bringing their friends, that is one measure of success. The instructors of those classes say their students' performances are going up. Unlike initial semesters, the instructors now look forward to teaching the classes. Now, there is a 63% rate to college-level class (lowest math to transfer-level math; lowest English reading or writing and ESL credit) for both English speaking and limited English speaking groups (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

One student talked about this program and how the college intentionally put them into classes together, starting with the ESL classes as a cohort group.

In the beginning, a new group of students take the same classes (same schedule with block classes), so that helps us to build friendships, develop study groups, find out who is good at what so that we can help each other. The college puts the students together, so they can build relationships between each semester. The college made a group of students start together, and the students split when they were ready to split (based on degree) (TC student, July 23, 2008).

That same student also mentioned the benefits of the required weekly meetings within that program. “We have weekly meetings. When we’re having trouble with something, they [the College] try to help us” (TC student, July 23, 2008).

One student from **El Paso Community College (TX)** student shared specific experiences with the completion of 20 units of ESL:

Yes, my first 20 units was ESL. I started from the bottom and I raised my way to the top. Yes, I took math. Math is hard for me. I’m not a ‘number person’. It was hard, but the program provides tutoring, teachers for those special students. My teacher is like half-Hispanic and half-American, and she understood Spanish when I started taking that class; that helped me a lot. This program was just for Hispanic people, ‘old ladies like me who were starting school’. I’m so happy because some of those students who started with me have already graduated; we keep going, we keep going, persisting.

One student specifically mentioned initial difficulty with courses as a result of limited-English and shared increased learning as a result of faculty helpfulness within ESL courses:

In the classroom, at first, it was hard for me to understand [because of the language.]...Yes. I had like three ESL courses. I liked all my instructors, because they were very, very helpful. They would study with me until I would get the knowledge and explain to me what I didn’t understand (TC student, October 24, 2008).

Although several students mentioned that they needed to take ESL or developmental courses without credit, one shared how **Taft College (CA)** offered a special celebration and certificate for completion of those courses:

We have mothers, single-mothers, all kinds of Hispanic students...they gave us a certificate that we already completed the units for college and now we need only the additional units for transfer. We started with 30 and now have 23 students who are still going (TC student, July 22, 2008).

As awareness of the need for specific skills instruction in Foundation and ESL level courses grew, a **Taft College (CA)** Supplemental Instructional Assistance program was designed and implemented. The Supplemental Instructional Assistants provide both an intermediary for student/instructor interactions and resource for teaching/learning missing skill sets outside of class time. Short, application specific, instructional modules have been created to meet student/instructor needs. Students can meet with the Supplemental Instructional Assistants during open laboratory time and receive instruction on any module. Some examples of modules currently in use are: Using a thesaurus, using dictionary for a student with spelling difficulties, and using Boolean operators. New modules are created as needed. One **Taft College (CA)** student shared examples of how Project Gold supported success:

One of the most helpful things that I've found is at Taft College is the Project Gold program. They will help if you need supplies for school; or if you need assistance. If you need supplemental instruction, you can study with them – they are the assistants for the instructors, who help you to do homework or study (TC student, October 24, 2008).

Another **Taft College (CA)** student mentioned a preference for supplemental instruction at the migrant program over regular College tutorial services.

If I don't understand something and don't want to go to the main College for tutoring because I don't understand, there are bi-lingual people to help and translations. There are many people at the Center who helped us translate our documents for college (TC student 2, October 24, 2008).

For its work with Achieving the Dream at **El Paso Community College (TX)**, one administrator tells about the College's focus on developmental education and ESL:

We're focusing on developmental education and ESL. We're looking at how soon we can have developmental education students take college-level courses by using the learning communities' courses. A student can take developmental education course and a student success course – they would be tied to two other college-level courses. The objective is twofold: it's disheartening for many high school graduates to be put into developmental education courses that do not count toward their college degree, and that's where you lose them. What you can do by pairing the developmental education course with a college-level course, you are getting rid of the stigma that they are only involved in developmental education. Because of the remedial need, you give them extra support – which is the two instructors in these courses. We have done a couple of pilots on this, and we're not ready yet to talk about the data (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

Another from **El Paso Community College (TX)** shared about preparatory education and testing:

We have a program called the PREP program – Pretesting Retesting Educational Program. This program helps to prepare our students for the entrance/placement examinations. At EPCC, we have a large number of students who have developmental education needs. The PREP program doesn't hope to teach all that information to the students, we hope to help students improve to the level that they are able to in a review format so that they are well-placed. This process helps to support and place students in the right class. We don't want them to be in a class that they don't need – if they just need a review session, they can place one or two levels higher. That helps the students feel better about themselves. This program was funded by Title V. I can tell you that last semester, they saw 1700 students, and at least 67% of those students improved one course level or higher (telephone interview with college administrator, August 27, 2008).

One student from **El Paso Community College (TX)** took two remedial classes, one in math and the other in English. “The remedial courses helped me a lot to get me to the college-level courses. Those teachers helped a lot. They broke what they were teaching down and made it easier to understand” (EPCC

student, July 24, 2008). **El Paso Community College (TX)** focuses on how developmental education can be improved.

In English, the faculty have changed some of the cut scores in Placement test – they lowered the level, so that those students who were at the upper level of placement would be allowed into the college-level English course. Their thinking is that those students will do well because they were on the boarder; it will give more students an opportunity to take college-level English – they are starting that this week and plan to evaluate it. We are beginning to develop into data-driven decision-making – checking the numbers on students who place into certain courses and how they do. They aligned the curriculum in the highest math, so that it would prepare the students to do well in the college-level course. There was a lot of repetition of topics in developmental math courses, so they eliminated redundancy, but tapped the important objectives that would lead to success in the college-level course. The faculty looked carefully at the syllabi and curriculum to make revisions (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

One student served as a student-mentor, and alongside the instructor helped retain students with developmental and ESL needs.

After class, I worked with an English 1302 professor who started a pilot program to retain students. A lot of the students either had family problems, ESL problems that they cannot keep up with the work, disillusioned because they'd get bad grades. Students who couldn't write well, halfway through the semester would give up. One student got caught into jail because he hadn't paid his speeding tickets. Others got married, and even though they were doing great, they disappeared one day. Another suggestion was to put a mentor in a class to help as a tutor. As a teacher's aid, if the students had questions, they could go to the teacher or go to us; most of the time, they went to us. Whenever a student was absent, we'd give them a call to tell them what they missed and what they needed for next time. Overall, we had slightly higher retention rates, but we came upon the same problems – personal problems, but it did help those who really wanted to stay in school (EPCC student, July 25, 2008).

On-campus employment was a sub-theme that emerged within this theme. **Taft College (CA)** implemented a specific employment of “people”

program designed to support students academically, both in-and-out of the classroom:

We have this program that does not resemble anywhere else. We created six employee positions, with AA degree requirements for that position. They are in the classroom, with the instructors and students, and in the lab. They are a communication bridge between the students and instructors and generalists who can help students in any subject. They model successful student behavior, they will ask instructors questions that other students are too scared to ask, and they meet with the instructors and tell the instructors how the students are doing and what the students need. When a student walks into the lab, the SIA knows exactly how the instructor is teaching. We rotate these people with priority in pre-collegiate courses. We have 10 classes covered at this point. Last semester, we had 24 classes covered. This will be our fifth semester, and we started the pilot half-way through the semester of Project Gold. This approach gives immediate feedback and examples (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM) is purposefully employing peer tutoring that helps improve student success.

The college hires 50 students from sophomores through graduate students, since we're across the street from the University. What we consider peer tutors are available to students at all of our locations, so we have over 90% Hispanic students in some of those centers. There is a correlation between the number of student visits to tutoring centers and their GPAs; if they have visited five times for English, then that student has a higher grade than students who didn't go to tutoring. We had over -- - visits last year (telephone interview with college administrator, August 29, 2008).

Colleges are employing their students, and various student employees commented about how their campus jobs helped to support their success. One student shared how on-campus employment supported relationships and enabled success.

The things that made me be successful was the whole fact that I worked here – I'm here everyday, and so I got to meet a lot of people – people who were good in specific subjects. I'd help them register and they'd help me with classes. Working here helped me to know the teachers and student tutoring services – that helped a lot. Since I was working here, it wasn't a big deal to take classes here (STC student, July 31, 2008).

One student at **South Texas College (TX)** mentioned the opportunity to attend college was available specifically because the College supports student-employees:

Receiving my associates helped me obtain a job as a faculty secretary at South Texas College; that's when the bachelors program here was being evolved – if you work here, they help you pay for your classes. After you've worked here for a year, you can apply for a program to get your college expenses (9 hours of credit) paid. I had to pay for my books. I didn't want to pass up the opportunity to get my bachelors for almost free (STC student, July 18, 2008).

Another student commented about student employment that helped other students succeed: “At work, I deal with the students, tutor them, get them motivated to go to college, tell them about college life, help them with their reading and math” (EPCC student, June 30, 2008). Another student told how working in the College's prep lab (testing) offered an opportunity to be advised there by the student's supervisor.

I got to work for him for a couple of weeks. He asked me about my plans, and he kind of counseled me – he told me when I went to get a job that I shouldn't do something I didn't like. From there, my degree changed to Chemistry. I have an AA in business administration, but when I transfer, I will pursue Chemistry (EPCC student, July 25, 2008).

Another student talked about a student employee supervisor serving as a role model and source of encouragement.

My boss at the tutoring center is my role model. Anytime I succeeded in something, she would congratulate me, give me a hug, tell me she's proud of me, tell me to keep on going, and told me her story – persevered to doctorate (DACC student 2, April 5, 2008).

Multiple other students talked about their roles as mentors and tutors, and how their college employment supported either their success or helped other students, or both.

Since I had a job as a mentor, I was probably a mentor to over 150 students. I was with them for four semesters. Each semester, I had 30-35 students. I'd be walking down the hallway and see a mentored student, and they would stop by and say hello (EPCC student, July 25, 2008).

Another student shared how serving as a tutor for Hispanic students provided an opportunity for peer mentorship.

I get a lot of Hispanic students as an English tutor – there are many where English is their worse subject – they hate it, they don't enjoy it. When I see their papers, I first point out something good before showing them their mistakes so I can mentor and tutor them along so they can gain independence and confidence. If I feel led, I might share with them my reason for why I'm here, why I struggle, that I'm not perfect and just take it day by day (DACC student, April 6, 2008).

Advising. Students spoke as often about academic advising as they did about the advisors themselves. Some students commented about their uses of advising services and how advisors helped support student success. A student from **South Texas College (TX)** shared how an advisor helped with goal setting.

Education comes first. Don't go out and party, just study. You need to set your goals. I wrote down my list and set my goals. I would tell her you can go here with this advisor who can advise you to help you. Advisors helped me decide my major (STC student, July 24, 2008).

Several of the students who talked about advising most often commented specifically about their connection with a specific advisor. One administrator from **Taft College (CA)** shared how Hispanic students specifically sought out one Hispanic advisor.

Prospective Hispanic students [at Taft College] would come in [to Project Gold] and ask for a specific advisor who spoke Spanish. If that advisor wasn't around, then the students would come back. Anytime anyone with a strong accent came in, they would be sent to that advisor, and he'd ask them what they'd want to do (telephone interview with college administrator, September 5, 2008).

A **Taft College (CA)** student shared how that same advisor offered support from the student's initial experiences with the College and throughout the process of taking courses.

The first person I met when I started college was a college administrator in the immigrant program. If you have a problem, personal or college-related, he is a person who can listen; he tells you, don't worry about it, we'll solve it, just keep going. He is the person who gave me the application for my citizenship. If we need books for summer, I'm taking summer classes because I want to finish soon, and the program doesn't provide for summer classes – he buys books for the program and lends them to us. He provides tutors for those classes (taking care of children in Childcare Center) (TC student, July 22, 2008).

And another student also mentioned a connection with this advisor.

The director of the Project Gold has motivated me. He understands me, in my situation, because he's also from Mexico. He went through all that I went through: he had to learn English because his first language is Spanish. Now that he became director of a school, he tells me that 'you can do it, too; it's difficult, but not impossible.' He always supports me; gives me information about scholarships; tells me about programs that I can apply for (TC student, October 24, 2008).

Other students talked specifically about being successful as a result of support from academic advisors.

Last fall when I went to see my advisor [was my best memory of college.] She looked at my degree, and said I had enough to get my associate's as a Translator. I was ecstatic! I didn't know I was almost done. I needed only one more class. That was pretty cool – that I had enough hours for the degree that I've always wanted (STC student 2, July 18, 2008).

Another student from **South Texas College (TX)** shared how an advisor provided information about which courses would enable the student to complete the Associate's degree.

I found a really nice advisor that looked over my hours and degree plan and told me if I took five classes that I could get an Associate's degree. He helped me to figure out the classes to take (STC student, July 18, 2008).

Another student shared how an advisor served to provide more than the tasks of academic or career advising.

She is there for us all the time. She is young; maybe she can be one of my daughter's ages. She is so friendly – she is there for you all the time. If I don't know what I want to do, be a teacher, counselor, social worker – so she told me to give her some time, and she would have an answer soon. The next day she called me and asked me to pass by her office. She found the study plan to take at Taft and later transfer for the Family Counselor degree. You feel you can trust her. Sometimes, you just want someone to talk to, she will ask you about your classes. She will connect you to people who can help you. She really shows she cares about the students. People like me who are insecure, that makes me feel good – like someone cares about my problems and me – that someone is there (TC student, July 23, 2008).

Challenges to Success. Successful Hispanic students are not without challenge. Students were asked four questions that helped to illuminate the challenges that Hispanic students, and even “successful” Hispanic students face.

1. *Tell me about your typical day while attending college. How did you spend your time, on-campus and off-campus?*

Many Responsibilities. Successful Hispanic students are busy – they work to juggle academics, family life, and jobs. When asked to describe their typical day while attending college, how they spend their time on-campus and off-campus, many of these students had very full days (and nights). As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, most Hispanic students worked (16 of 18), 14 of those worked at least 20 hours per week and seven worked full-time. Most attended college full-time (13); four were part-time; and one did not respond. Many had families and children who lived with them at home (one-third).

Students' stories about how they spend their typical college day show determination and perseverance. Below are eight, "daily" stories that show similarities of many responsibilities, perseverance, and sacrifice. The student in the following example showed sacrifice for family, practice of effective time management by focusing on completing assignments while at college, and commitment to work – even at the expense of sleep.

Story 1: Since I started going to college, my days are very long. I have to get up early at 5:30am, cook for my family, get ready for school, go to school at 8am and have classes (20 units) until 3pm. I go from one class to another. Between classes, I would go to the math library or library to do my homework, because I have to work nights. I get home at 4pm, make dinner, rest, and then work from 10:30pm until 6:30am. Those days, I did not sleep much at all – 3 or 4 hours maximum. I wouldn't tell people to do that – it's really dangerous. I just wanted to finish school (TC student, October 24, 2008).

Even with various commitments to family and work, another student shared connections made with other students by spending time outside-the-classroom, but on-campus.

Story 2: I get to college around 8/8:30am. My classes start at 9:30am, so I stay in my car and study before I go to class. I have my classes back to back, so I can go back to Bakersfield. I eat lunch on campus – sometimes with other people. Sometimes we take our lunch to the tutoring room, so we can sit down and do homework at the same time. I finish classes at 2pm. I pick up my kids from school, go to work from 3:30pm-8 or 9pm. I get home, cook dinner, watch TV while eating, and then do laundry, pull out my books and look at what I need to do. I sit down and talk with my kids. They go to bed around 10pm-11pm, and I go to my room and do homework until 12am or 1am (TC student, July 23, 2008).

Lack of sleep seemed to be a common theme in several conversations.

Story 3: I wake up around 7am, my first drive to school leaves with my oldest son and he starts at 7:30am. I drive them to school, and then I help my children (small ones) to get ready. Then, I drive my daughter to kindergarten; then I drive my son to the Children's Center, and they take care of him there for me. Then I get a shower and go to school between 8am-12pm and then 1pm-2pm. I sleep for three or four hours until I'm ready to pick up the kids from school. I come to my house, make dinner, do chores, clean the house, and then I rest until I go to work. I work from 6:30pm and my shift ends at 3am. I'm really tired (TC student, July 24, 2008).

Story 4: I wake up at 4:40am because I go run in the morning and that's the only time I have time. I run from 5am to 6am – 3 to 5 or 6 miles. We get home and wake up all the men in my life which are my husband and kids and everyone starts getting ready for school. Everyone is self-sufficient, so we all leave around the same time - 7:15am. I'm at work by 7:30am and either take a 30 minute lunch or don't take class, and I finish at 4pm with work. I either go to class or one of my labs at the college and work. I may get home around 7pm. If dinner is not ready, my husband and I will start it. 10pm – hit the computer again for an hour – until I'm out (STC student, July 18, 2008).

One student shared about working during the day and taking courses in the evenings.

Story 5: I like to take evening classes. I get up at like 9am, go to work, and then go to school. I do my homework at around 9pm or 10pm until about midnight (EPCC student, June 30, 2008).

A couple of students talked about taking 18 or more credit hours per semester, and the student below shares an example of a day in the life of taking 18 credit hours.

Story 6: I wake up at around 4am or 4:30am, and I would do some reading for about an hour. Take shower, eat something, wake up my daughter and take her to day-care. I would be at school between 7am-8am, depending on the day. I would start class at 7:30am and wouldn't finish until 6pm. I would have class all day. There might be three hours in between, without a class, I would work at the writing center. I was taking 18 credit hours. I would go to either my sister or my cousins house to pick up my daughter, have dinner there, drive home, get home around 7:30pm/8pm, watch tv, give my daughter her bath, put her to bed, and then depending on how much homework I had, I'd do homework for an hour or two (EPCC student, July 3, 2008).

Both examples below include students talking about making the most use of their time while on campus, whether doing group work, studying for exams, or going to tutoring.

Story 7: I wake up between 6:30am-7:15am, get ready, come to school usually by 8:30am. I go to class at 9am, class finishes at 11:45am, eat, go to work until 4pm or 5pm. I go home and eat, do homework for about 3 to 6 hours and usually go to bed at around 11pm-12am, depends. I do group work with other students. Since I work at school, if I'm going to have an exam, I'll come and get together with other students to study – 12pm to 5pm for group study (with breaks, in preparation for exam). If I have to skip work, I will because getting together in a group to study helps (DACC student, April 7, 2008).

Story 8: I get off work at 10:30pm and sleep until 6am. 6am wake up, get ready, get kids ready, take them to school and drop them off there, go to my classes which start at 8:30am; between classes, I work at the tutoring center or I plan my classes in the morning and then go to my other job; I then go to my custodian job from 4pm to 12am, but I usually get off at 10:30pm. During college – as soon as I get there, go to snack bar and get coffee, go to class; between classes, go to computer lab and check my online course; little bit of homework or if there's a group project, I'll work with a group member; after my classes, I go straight to the tutoring center, so they allow us to do our homework there. That way, when I get off, I don't have to do as much. I pretty much finish my homework at college

before leaving campus daily other than the big projects (DACC student, April 5, 2008).

The above student interviewee stories show significant constraints on students' schedules. And yet, these were the students who achieved to degree attainment, certificate, or transfer.

While many successful Hispanic students shared about people who motivated them and experiences that contributed to their success, not all relationships and experiences were positive. Students were asked, *What is your worst memory of your college experience?* One student shared about having to drop out one semester, and that negatively affected the student's GPA. The student chose to persist, and focused on improving grades throughout the duration of the degree.

My worst memory – third semester – had a 3.6 gpa, and I let it go. I failed all my courses and dropped to a 2.6. That semester, my vehicle broke down, I couldn't make it to class, I dropped the classes I was falling behind on, picked up mini-semester courses but those were too much work – one week in a mini-semester is like three weeks, and I had family problems. Now, I managed to with a lot of hard work and dedication to get straight As and brought that up to a 3.8 GPA (DACC student 2, April 5, 2008).

Although most students commented on faculty helpfulness, encouragement, and motivation, not all students loved every teacher. In fact, a couple of students mentioned that their worst memory of college included specific faculty. One student shared a general dislike for a course because of an instructor.

This teacher I had. I don't even remember his name. I hated that class. The problem is that I love English and reading. He was just rude. Some teachers try to motivate you to work harder and push you, but he did it in a really arrogant way. He didn't make me feel smart. Some of my ideas, he would just shoot them down. I think it was the fact that he didn't help. He tried to push you, but in a negative way – one time, I was typing and he

called me “ignorant” or something because I couldn’t type, he was like, ‘You can’t even type’ (EPCC student, June 30, 2008).

Another student shared about dropping a class because of an instructor.

I remember I was going to take a class (English 1302) and the professor was very negative. Half of you probably won’t be here til the end of the semester. I remember feeling scared. When somebody is being so negative, and you’re so new at it, you’re thinking, “He’s probably right, I’m not going to last.” I remember being so concerned, and I let him get to me. I ended up dropping that class (EPCC student, June 30, 2008).

Another student discussed frustration that resulted from not being able to apply for a scholarship.

I’m a go-getter and always trying to find information for myself and others going into my career. At NMSU, there was a scholarship for engineering students. I asked for an application for the scholarship, and one of the advisors told me that this scholarship is only for NMSU students, and I said, ‘No, it’s not. It’s available to anyone pursuing what I was pursuing.’ That pushed me back and shut that door on that opportunity. Even though I get my degree in general studies and it says, ‘NMSU,’ but they tell me it’s not available to me. My degree does not say, Dona Ana, it says NMSU (DACC student, April 5, 2008).

One student commented that a specific instructor caused the student’s worst experience and almost resulted in that student leaving college.

We went to a field trip to Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo. I was excited because I used to live in San Luis Obispo. We met one of the authors that we were supposed to be reading. I was going to call my nephew to give to him some papers that they need. When we were in SLO, I told him that he could pass by and give him the papers. I was waiting for him for five minutes and I turned around and everyone was gone. The teacher was very upset with me because I was not there in the group. Another teacher was with us, and I told that teacher about giving the papers to my nephew. I had never been on a field trip, I didn’t know about the rules. I was there, waiting and waiting outside the bus for three hours. I told the instructor that you should let us know the rules; I don’t know what you can do or cannot do, so I was very upset. All the students told me not to worry that everything was okay. Everyone was upset with her because ‘she was too good’ (TC student, July 22, 2008).

In the following excerpts, two students talked about how stress from lack of time and full schedules resulted in their worst memories.

Stressing out about having enough time to do all these things. Even though I'm single, you still have problems at home – like my parents being ill. It was really important to pass these classes and to do well, so I put a lot of stress on myself because I worked here and didn't want to embarrass anyone (EPCC student, July 18, 2008).

One semester when I was taking one of the developmental courses, I was taking three courses with my full-time job, getting up at 4am. I was getting panic attacks. I need to push myself, but balance, because I still have a life. I had too much on my plate. I slowed down, completed my courses, putting in a lot of overtime – so, I backed off a little (STC student, July 18, 2008).

Students also were asked about changes they would recommend. In particular, they were asked, *If you could change anything about your college experience, what would you change and why, and how would you change it?* The student below suggested a change to a nursing program as a result of what the student identified as “unorganized” instructors.

I would change, in my program-the nursing program, the instructors are unorganized when we ask when we're going to start our preceptor or clinicals. They are unorganized. There is a lack of communication among instructors, and that, I would change. The information they give does not match (each other) (DACC student, April 7, 2008).

One student shared about how admissions processes can be confusing and should be improved.

The admissions process – we find ourselves whether it's me or other people who don't work here, sometimes it's confusing – where do I go first, where do I go from there – make it more user-friendly (STC student, July 18, 2008).

A couple of students mentioned that the change they would have made would have been to persist toward degree attainment without stopping out. The student

below shared about how a focus for Hispanic students on earning money immediately after high school may divert students away from college.

I would have finished when I started a long time ago. We [Hispanic students] are always thinking for earning quick money out of high school, so we'll get the job to bring in immediate money. Living expenses, mortgages, children - \$11 hour doesn't cover your household. You need to keep pursuing your education (DACC student, April 5, 2008).

The majority of the student interviewees responded that they had not thought about leaving college. For most, they made a choice that leaving was not an option. However, a few students described situations and experiences that may have caused them to leave. Students were asked, *Did you ever think about leaving college; if so, what would have caused you to leave college?* One student shared about lack of finances resulted in a departure from college.

When I first got out of college and left, the thing that forced me to leave was the lack of money. At this point, nothing would cause me to leave (EPCC student, July 3, 2008).

Another talked about how discouragement from one instructor resulted in a short-departure, and encouragement from other instructors resulted in a return.

I wanted to quit that time when I felt disrespect from the instructor (field trip above). I was feeling awful. She was too rude for me. I was so upset that I wanted to quit, so for a week or so, I didn't go to school. Some instructors called me and told me to come back and finish that semester, "you have a good grade; don't quit." I went back to her class, and I checked with her two weeks before and I had an A – in one week that A went to an F because I missed a big test and project. I needed that class to transfer (it was an English class). I failed, and I talked to my counselor who knew about that problem – she was the only teacher who taught that class, so there was no way to avoid it. The counselor told me that she understood that I had a big problem with her, and she's hard to deal with. So, I did it, I'm still having problems with her. One of her classes was

cancelled because there was not enough students and the other had two students – everyone is avoiding her class (TC student, July 22, 2008).

III. SUMMARY

Hispanic students bring with them some unique characteristics to Hispanic-serving-community colleges. Many of these students share similar experiences, and most of those experiences surround their connections with specific people who support their success. Without question, successful Hispanic students take on many responsibilities in order to achieve in college. Important Hispanic student outcomes are realized when both Hispanic-serving-community colleges engage their students and Hispanic students engage with their colleges. Highly-engaging Hispanic-serving-community colleges intentionally design programs, services, and practices that exemplify an underlying expectation that relationships matter – those faculty, staff, administrators, and peer-students work in various capacities specifically to help Hispanic students realize success. Successful Hispanic students invest into their college experiences by exerting effort and engaging themselves with helpful people and useful programs and services.

The purpose of this chapter was to organize and report information collected from colleges' examples and student and college leader interviews to answer the following two questions: 1. *In what ways – programs, practices, services – do institutions engage Hispanic students toward the types of activities, experiences, and relationships that promote student success?* and 2. *What are the experiences and relationships in which Hispanic students invest that support*

their engagement and success? Interpretations of these findings are provided in chapter 5, *Findings and Recommendations*.

Chapter 5, Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this research is to investigate highly-engaging and high-percent Hispanic enrollment community colleges – what institutions do to purposefully engage students; and 2) to explore experiences that contribute to Hispanic student success. This chapter is designed to provide interpretation of the findings and Recommendations for Research and Practice.

I. INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS.

For the purposes of learning about Hispanic student engagement and success, the interpretations of the findings are provided in the following sections below: a) What Highly-Engaging and Hispanic-Serving Community Colleges Do, and b) What Hispanic Students Invest. The conclusion for this work includes Recommendations for Research and Practice.

A. WHAT HIGHLY-ENGAGING AND HISPANIC-SERVING COMMUNITY COLLEGES DO.

This section provides an interpretation of the data, organized by answering the following question: *In what ways – programs, practices, services – do institutions engage Hispanic students in the types of activities, experiences, and relationships that promote student success?* Included in this response is a focus on colleges' practices, programs, services, and people that show colleges' commitment to

- Hispanic students' families;
- Hispanic students' financial needs;
- “Requirements” that make engagement inescapable;

- Faculty and staff who serve as role models and have high-expectations for Hispanic students;
- Student services that *support* students.

Families Valued. The data show that Hispanic students value their families. In fact, many Hispanic students shared that they wanted to go to college to obtain jobs that would enable them to help support their families; some mentioned that they went to college to serve as role models to family members; and some indicated that members in their family were the people who most encouraged them to complete college. And yet, Hispanic students also reported that their families had little knowledge of or experience with college.

Approximately 19 parents were born in Mexico, and the majority of those parents completed either no education or only elementary education. Of those 17 parents who were born in the United States, only four completed an Associate's degree and three completed a Bachelor's degree.

Clearly, these 18 successful Hispanic students were devoted to their families. Some of the colleges reported that they believed in the importance of family for Hispanic students, and accordingly implemented programs to intentionally include Hispanic families in the college experience. Highly-engaging and Hispanic-serving-community colleges seem to act on the recognition that Hispanic families have limited experience with college and would benefit from information about college.

By implementing a Freshman Convocation that included students' families, **Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM)** served Spanish-

speaking families and helped by communicating in Spanish to alleviate parental concerns. It was during that Convocation that the college administration admitted an increased learning and understanding of Hispanic parents' needs and concerns. The college engaged the parents and created an opportunity to respond to concerns. It is very possible that this orientation inevitably helped to prepare (at least some of) the families by showing them how to support entering Hispanic students throughout their college experiences.

El Paso Community College (TX) discussed the need to include Hispanic students' families in the students' college experience. "We are finding that it's important to work with families and provide information on financial aid, even before students come to college (telephone interview with college administrator, August 27, 2008)". These institutions realize the financial struggle that attending college brings to these families. In addition to offering special orientation programs that include families, these colleges reach into their communities and provide information to Hispanic families on college and financial aid. Highly-engaging colleges serve those students and their families who walk onto their campuses, but these institutions also reach out to those Hispanic students and their families who have not yet enrolled.

Finances Supported. Highly-engaging and Hispanic-serving-community colleges realize that attending and completing college for Hispanic students is a choice to immediately forgo other possible earnings. Oftentimes, adult Hispanic students are expected to contribute to family incomes for the purposes of paying rent or mortgages and other expenses. Attending and completing college for

these students is a commitment of time away from jobs that support families – and college accordingly becomes a financial commitment not only for the students, but for their entire families.

In response to Hispanic students' financial needs, colleges implemented opportunities for some Hispanic students to gain on-campus, student-employment positions. Research (Astin, 1993) shows that students who work 20 or fewer hours per week on-campus are more likely to persist than those who work more than 20 hours per week off-campus. Colleges' employment of these students seemed to fulfill three needs: 1) provided financial support (pay and reduced tuition) necessary for these students to persist; 2) put these students into specific roles that would require their service to and interaction with other students; and 3) gave these students valuable and practical learning experiences. Not only was student employment valuable for the student employees, but it also served as a way to support other students (students commented consistently that student employee tutors and mentors helped them with their academics – in the classrooms, tutoring centers, and Hispanic centers). While on campus, student employment seemed beneficial to those students who worked 20 hours or less per week, other students who worked off-campus or worked more than 20 hours per week reported lack of sleep, increased stress, and struggles with limited time to accomplish their many responsibilities.

In addition to supporting students by effective student employment, **EI Paso Community College (TX)** creatively provided scholarships for its students. Rather than relying alone on state and federal aid and other loans, the college

proactively sponsored college events designed to raise money for scholarships. While the practice of providing institutional scholarships to students is not new, **EI Paso Community College (TX)** celebrated the College's commitment to students by how they secured these gifts.

Requirements that Make Engagement Inescapable. Students do not often complete courses or programs that are not required. Highly-engaging and Hispanic-serving community colleges realize what Hispanic students need, and they show commitment to serving those needs by implementing some requirements that make engagement inescapable. **EI Paso Community College (TX)** believes that its students will benefit from learning about how to be successful in college, and as a result has implemented a Student Success course that is required for all students who plan to transfer. If this required course proves effective for transfer students, then perhaps it also would prove effective for transfer students in other colleges and perhaps it would prove effective for larger groups of students across community colleges. What increases for student success might be realized if Hispanic-serving-community colleges required such a course to train students to be successful and incorporated active learning experiences that also helped to educate their parents about college?

Dona Ana Branch Community College (NM) indicates the need to focus on developmental education for two of its campuses that are 90% Hispanic. Students who enroll in developmental math at these campuses are required to use a software learning tool that implements active and collaborative learning

methods. Moreover, the college advocates for and requires full- and part-time faculty who teach those courses to employ teaching methods that promote active and collaborative learning. It is not uncommon in community colleges for part-time faculty and developmental education faculty to be left out of the professional development equation – but not at this college. In addition to training all participating faculty who teach in these courses, the College also hires and trains peer tutors who are placed within those courses to tutor students and serve as role models.

Faculty and Staff High-Expectations of Students. Highly-engaging and Hispanic-serving-community colleges contribute to student success by hiring the right people, training them well, and putting them in the right places and roles within the colleges. Both in and out of the classroom, these colleges' employees seem to hold high expectations for students. Many of them serve as role models to the students, often motivating students simply by telling their stories of achievement and then encouraging students' persistence.

Aside from a few exceptions, faculty in these institutions showed high expectations for students' engagement – students reported how faculty would require students' involvement and interactions with each other in and out of the classrooms. Colleges also described how service learning experiences, and academic competitions, would instill in students the value that faculty and staff held high expectations for student success. It was not uncommon for these students to report that college leaders would walk around, talk with students,

share their stories about their achievements, and encourage students' persistence.

These colleges appeared to hire the people who generally believed in the students they served. Almost as important to hiring, these colleges seemed to effectively place those people in positions that would best enable them to serve as role models for Hispanic students. Example after example offered insights into how Hispanic student success was not necessarily about a particular college program or practice, but more about the person or persons who served and mentored the students through those programs or practices. Students talked about advising specifically in terms of their advisors.

Student Support Services – Inescapable Engagement. From review of the data, it seemed these highly-engaging and Hispanic-serving-community colleges implemented student support services that made engagement inescapable. When these students talked about student support services, they shared as if these services and programs were designed intentionally so that students could not avoid using them. The CASA program at **Taft College (CA)**, Outreach Program at **South Texas College (TX)**, and Summer Bride Program and Project Dream at **El Paso Community College (TX)** are models of how colleges reached into their communities and colleges to engage Hispanic students. These programs served many needs for Hispanic students, including scheduling block courses after students dropped off their children at daycare, offering consistent course scheduling to enable students to persist without having to deal with the impact of schedule changes on childcare, providing financial

support for tuition, renting/loaning textbooks, putting tutors in the classrooms, and providing Spanish-speaking tutors at the centers.

South Texas College (TX) provided evidence that eliminating late registration helped to improve enrollment patterns and increase student persistence. Implementing mini-mesters that began after regular courses enabled those students who otherwise would have enrolled late to enroll on-time. By eliminating late registration, this new College practice required students' early engagement with the college's support services. Moreover, this new practice required students to participate on time in the classes for which they enrolled.

These highly-engaging colleges committed to the importance of developmental education and ESL courses. Oftentimes, students who need to complete developmental or ESL courses do so without academic credit; even so, these colleges celebrated students' completion of these courses and one distributed "certificates of completion" for those who persisted through the ESL courses. Developmental education and ESL courses were required, but at these colleges, completion of these requirements was valued and celebrated.

Moreover, **El Paso Community College (TX)** connected students in developmental education by pairing students in those courses with a college-level course. The College intentionally designed its developmental education program to give students hope of also completing courses that were offered for credit, helping them progress toward attaining their educational goals.

This research also includes interpretations of successful Hispanic students and what they invest into their college experiences and relationships.

B. What Successful Hispanic Students Invest

What are the experiences and relationships in which Hispanic students invest that support their engagement and success? Successful Hispanic students made important connections with other students, faculty, and staff – oftentimes, those connections were the direct result of what colleges did; however, these students exerted the effort necessary to develop these connections. Included in this section are descriptions of successful Hispanic students' behaviors and attitudes – connecting with others, attending regularly, managing time, seeking out services, and believing that quitting is not optional.

Connecting with others. Student-to-student connections helped support student success. Most student interviewees placed value on study groups. Some younger students mentioned the benefit of learning from older students, while some older students mentioned a commitment to reaching out to the younger and less-experienced students. Although some study groups were required or encouraged by faculty, some students admitted that they participated in study groups simply because they needed help and support from other students. Many friendships resulted from these study groups, and these friendly peer connections offered opportunities for students to motivate one another. Several of the student interviewees mentioned the value of connecting with other Hispanic students, with specific intentions of seeking out Hispanic students to help them learn about how to be successful in college. Students who served as mentors and tutors likewise connected with other Hispanic students. In fact,

some of the student interviewees mentioned that their tutor/mentor became a close friend.

The value of relationships between students is an important component of student success. Colleges can continue to foster student-to-student connections by showing students the types of relationships that contribute to success, such as those developed through study groups and tutoring/mentoring relationships. Students should be given practical information early on about the importance of why and how social integration can support academic integration and success.

Successful Hispanic students also connected with faculty and staff. The data showed consistently that these students sought out faculty during office hours, worked with them on projects and community service outside of class, contacted them by cell phone, and celebrated their achievements with faculty. These students also mentioned the value of mentorship from college staff, including Hispanic college leaders and administrators who served as role models, Hispanic staff who worked in Hispanic programs and served as mentors, and Hispanic tutors who could teach both in English and Spanish. While it appeared that these colleges invested in students' connections with faculty and staff, it also was clear that Hispanic students' efforts to reach out to and connect with key people in the college supported their success.

Attending Regularly, Managing Time. These successful Hispanic students described very busy schedules and constraints on time. Nonetheless, they agreed that attending class regularly was important to success. Moreover, they planned and managed their time as if success could not happen without

time management. Missing class or mismanaging time did not seem to be options for these students. It is unclear from this research whether these students learned about the importance of going to class and managing time through a specific college course, program, or service. It is clear that these students realized the values early on and lived them out as if there was not another option.

Seeking out Services. Although highly-engaging colleges took some of their services to the students, these data showed that students also sought out and used these services. Successful Hispanic students realized their need for and value of tutoring, and most described regular visits to tutors or using tutors who were provided in the classrooms.

Several students' talked about the helpfulness of academic advising. However, when discussing academic advising, most students focused less on the service of advising and more on the advisor as a person. Students mentioned "nice," "helpful," "encouraging," and other descriptions that showed that they placed value on connecting with people who showed that they cared.

Believing that quitting is not an option. For successful Hispanic students, even those who stopped out and returned, quitting simply was not an option. These students placed the value of a college education above many other responsibilities and goals. Hispanic students believe that finishing is the only option could be valuable resources for colleges to connect with entering Hispanic students and Hispanic students who enroll in developmental and ESL courses and programs.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH.

This is a “happy” study – it’s about effective colleges and successful students – while this research was designed for these purposes, there were some obvious limitations. Less-engaging colleges may do some of the same types of activities as those found in this study, but actualize different outcomes – this research did not answer the question about institutional differences regarding Hispanic student success between highly-engaging and other institutions. Furthermore, these colleges have student success rates that are far from being as high as students need and colleges would like to see. A huge challenge is how to produce these kinds of successes AT SCALE – for most students rather than a few students. Recommendations for future research may be to include institutions with *CCSSE* Benchmark scores that range from below average to above average – and ascertain whether there are similarities and/or differences in the colleges’ practices, programs, and services for all students.

This study is limited to successful Hispanic students, and did not address similarities and differences between “successful” Hispanic students and their Hispanic peers who either dropped out or stopped out. Recommendations for future research include the need to understand “successful” experiences and “unsuccessful” experiences – and to learn from both. The same college program or practice may result in different experiences and outcomes for Hispanic students.

This study is focused on Hispanic students and does not address non-Hispanic students. Without question, those colleges’ practices, programs,

services, and relationships that may support Hispanic student success also may very well support non-Hispanic student success. Recommendations for future research would be to investigate similarities and differences between success for Hispanic students and other students.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE.

Implementing a college program, practice, or service is one part of the equation for Hispanic student success; another part of that equation is “putting the right college employees in the most appropriate roles.” Over and over again, it seemed the highly-engaging, Hispanic-serving community colleges showed commitment to the power of relationships and accordingly focused on *who* should serve in and lead programs, practices, and services. Future recommendations for practice would include careful attention to relationships – answering the “who” of the College, on behalf of Hispanic students: who would...

- serve as role models for Hispanic students?
- reach out to Hispanic students – in the community and in the college?
- advocate for the Hispanic students?
- understand the Hispanic students’ culture and needs?
- be willing to go into the classrooms and provide student support services where the students are, rather than expecting them to go to a certain office?
- provide tutoring and tutoring in Spanish?
- be that person who encouraged and motivated them to persist?
- understand the value of and need for developmental education and ESL courses, and work to help Hispanic students (and all students) move effectively through those courses?
- realize the value of the Hispanic culture as one of collaboration and require orientation with students’ families, ESL and developmental learning communities and block courses linked with regular courses, and require study groups and other forms of student engagement?

Training and developing these people should include not only “what” to do to perform job duties and objectives, but “how” to live out in manner and behavior what it means to support Hispanic students’ success. Appreciating the Hispanic culture, committing to the improvement of Hispanic educational attainment, and desiring to be part of something bigger than oneself will be modeled from the top and spread organically throughout institutions. Leaders will show that they value the Hispanic culture, commit to helping improve Hispanic students’ success, and work with others to realize institutional effectiveness on behalf of these (and other) students. Those employees who value the Hispanic culture and believe fully that these students can succeed will want to share those values and efforts with others throughout the colleges. The movement to promote Hispanic student success could be realized if leaders and employees lived out these important values.

Investigating perceptions of and expectations for Hispanic students would be another recommendation for practitioners to consider. In every case, a successful Hispanic student would share a story about someone who encouraged or motivated them, and colleges would describe their commitment to supporting these students. And yet, the literature shows the consequences of “deficit thinking” and the real need to help these students succeed.

Recommendations for practice would be for all colleges to consider whether they are thinking about how to change Hispanic students and their cultures rather than thinking about changing their thoughts about Hispanic students. Perhaps our focus should not be about “how we think about them,” but rather “how we think

about ourselves.” Transformation from “deficit” to “empowering” thinking in regard to all students may foster colleges’ increased commitments to help Hispanic students realize the American dream.

Recommendations for practice also include the need for community colleges to create cultures of evidence and practice institutional effectiveness. Even with these highly-engaging colleges, the process of trying to collect information with evidence illuminated that certain people within the college had information that was not necessarily available to others. Some college administrators admitted to not having “data” to support the effectiveness of their programs, practices, and services, but tended to rely on verbal feedback from some students or accepted that success was the result of increasing size of programs.

These colleges employed effective programs and practices that supported Hispanic student success. However, it was unclear as to whether those programs and practices were implemented as a result of institutions’ policies and commitments to Hispanic student success. Institutions’ policies can show colleges’ commitments to Hispanic student success, include effective program and practice evaluations, and enable other colleges to learn from them.

Even with these highly-engaging colleges, some college contacts (including those who had direct connections with the student interviewees) had no email or telephone contact information for these students. In a couple of cases, it would take months for college contacts to provide contact information for five or so students. This small example showed the need for community

colleges to implement systems by which college employees can download information that would enable them to connect with students. The challenge to communicate with the “successful Hispanic students” brought to question whether and how colleges generally have good communication systems with their students. Students’ contact information and meaningful communications should be considered for future practice.

IV. SUMMARY

Finally, Hispanic students bring to college intentions to engage with faculty, staff, and peers and commitment to family, friends, and culture. Hispanic people value community; they value college; and they enroll disproportionately in community colleges. Community colleges are the vehicles that can help connect Hispanic students’ values and culture with successful academic achievements and outcomes. Now is the time for community colleges to learn from highly-engaging, Hispanic community colleges about the ways in which they intentionally support Hispanic student success.

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