4\textsuperscript{th} Annual Texas Higher Education Symposium (August 2012)

Parent & Family Working Group Narrative

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Background:

One of the primary challenges for those of us who work to improve the postsecondary access and success of underrepresented students lies in understanding just what information is most useful to and relevant to students and their families, in discovering and implementing the most appropriate ways to serve parents, guardians and other family members, and in identifying ways that family involvement can become a consistent component of not only K-12 practices, but also college and university outreach and service.

Literature shows that parents have high aspirations for their children to go to college and be successful. The lack of knowledge about college costs, financial aid, and how to get to college are substantial barriers. Recognizing and building upon cultural wealth of communities can be utilized P-20 to develop more effective and culturally relevant college preparation and planning. While the information needs of Latino families have been widely noted and can be in part satisfied by providing more bilingual materials, it must be stressed that by using the cultural wealth of communities, college access and success related information can be disseminated in a way which is more relatable and ultimately more relevant to Latino parents and family members.

Working Group:

This working group was designed to facilitate an intentional discussion among participants about research, theory and practice related to the role of Latino parents and family in college access and success. The session began with brief individual introductions and participants were invited to leave their contact information so that we could continue to network and share information after the conference. This was followed by a brief introduction to issues on parent and family involvement by the facilitators.

The following discussion questions guided the discussion:
1. What are the gaps in research on the role of parents in college access and success?
2. What theoretical frameworks are we using in our work with parents, and how, and in what ways are we expanding these theories by considering the role of diverse families?
3. How can we translate our research on parents/families into practice and policy at the community level?
4. How can we continue to stay connected and support each other after the conference?

The session participants represented all parts of the P-20 pipeline, i.e., public school elementary through high school through administration, high ed professors, staff, and administrators, master-level students and doctoral-level students. The diversity of our group led to broad discussion on various issues, nuances, promising practices, and research relating to parent and family involvement. In total, 6 areas were discussed: starting early, community outreach, structural issues & institutional barriers, research, policy, & practice, sharing resources, and the role of faculty and the University. For a brief overview of the items discussed, please see the 4\textsuperscript{th} Annual Texas Higher Education Symposium ‘Parent & Family Working Group Report.’

In order to stay connected and support each other after the conference, members of the working group agreed to participate in an electronic dropbox for members to share research, resources, and other materials on Latino parent and family involvement.