

Latino Scoreboard on Texas Higher Education: *Just Who's "Closing the Gaps"?*

Arturo Vega & Rubén Martínez

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ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the effectiveness of the Closing the Gaps Higher Education Plan approved and implemented by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 2000 to improve the quality of higher education and address educational gaps prevalent among the state's diverse populations. The plan targets the four areas for improvement: 1) student participation, 2) success, 3) excellence, and 4) research. This paper focuses only on the first and second goals. In addition to providing an overview of Closing the Gaps, a Latino Scorecard is presented for 34 of Texas' public universities based on eight institutional measures including resources, enrollments, graduation rates, student/faculty ratios, affordability, student diversity, faculty representativeness, and local population figures. The overall scorecard is produced by adding the z-scores for the eight measures for each institution. Negative values are assigned to two z-scores, one a measure of student/faculty equity and the other a measure of affordability. The negative values provide counterweights to the effects of Latino majority enrollments at South Texas institutions (a correlated variable) and to the relatively higher tuition costs at some institutions (another correlated variable). Statistical analyses show that Latino students are concentrated at institutions at the lower end of the State's higher education stratification system, which are located in South Texas where this population is concentrated. They also show that these institutions received fewer resources than those institutions at the top of the system. Consequently, while the scorecard ranks the institutions in terms of how well they do by Latinos, the statistical analyses shows that geographic location is related to Latino enrollments and institutional resources are related to Latino graduation rates.