

InterAction

A Call to Action

Policy Solutions

The following policy solutions are the result of three InterAction forums in which the Intercultural Development Research Association and partner institutions brought together representatives from PK-12, colleges and universities, communities and businesses from rural, urban, and border regions. The forums provided a new framework for discourse and creating policy solutions that would increase Latino access and success in higher education. Guiding this effort were principles for a new vision and action:

- ❖ From access and success for only a *few* to access and success for *all* students.
- ❖ From a culture of blaming to a culture of shared accountability for student success.
- ❖ From isolated efforts in PK-12, higher education, and communities to interconnected support for Latino student success PK through graduate school.

Following are the resulting policy solutions for each of the seven issues that framed the discourse presented on February 2, 2005.

Preparing Students

Quick Facts

IDRA's research shows that Texas high schools lose one third of their students before graduation. Of the total who survive and graduate with a high school diploma, one of two are White, one of three are Hispanic, and one of six are Black.

– *Intercultural Development Research Association, October 2004*

Of those who graduate from high school, two of five earn a “recommended or above” degree. Only one of three Hispanic students earn the “preferred” degree, and half are low-income (only one of 20 Whites with this degree are low-income).

– *Intercultural Development Research Association, October 2004*

Policy Solutions

Establish and fund a statewide system that aligns public school standards with higher education standards, particularly in composition, reading comprehension and mathematics. This would also align an accelerated curriculum across PK-20.

Establish and fund a “course ladder” system in which all high school students have a requirement of at least two dual credit courses for graduation. This would bridge colleges and universities with high schools.

Establish and fund academic summer camps for middle school students to prepare them to enroll in high school accelerated curricula that will prepare them for college.

Require a half credit high school course that supports transitions from high school to college (“planning for college”) to be taken by all juniors and seniors.

Increase access to technology in rural areas to facilitate admissions and access to online financial aid applications.

Establish and fund a statewide grant that reinforces college preparation and enrollment in historically under-represented areas around the state.

College Access

Quick Facts

Of those who graduate from high school, only one of five enroll in a Texas public university the following fall. Close to one of four enroll in a two-year college, but more than half will not enroll at all.

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2003*

Hispanic student enrollment increased from 23 percent in the fall of 2000 to 25 percent in the fall of 2003 but still falls short of meeting its 2005 target.

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2003*

Policy Solutions

De-emphasize weight given to standardized test scores in admission policies and merit-based scholarship programs. Use multiple criteria for admissions that are more dependent on academic courses, extra-curricular activities, recommendation letters and individual interviews when required.

Tie higher education accountability with enrollment targets or critical indicators (such as percentage of minority or poor students) using an audit management team for monitoring progress.

Eliminate duplicative assessment in high school and college (TAKS exit level, SAT/ACT and THEA), in the Texas tradition of not spending money on redundancy.

Use a formula adjustment in college and university allocation that expands technology in rural areas.

Increase the allotment for access to instruction via technology.

Keep the Top 10 Percent Plan to ensure isolated and rural students have access to colleges and universities.

Establish financial incentives for institutions to recruit, retain and graduate students from college and graduate schools.

Institutional Persistence

Quick Facts

Once enrolled, students have the best chance of returning for a second year if they are full-time students. This is a more important factor than the type of diploma earned in high school.

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2003*

Full-time college status is difficult given that one of four high school students are economically disadvantaged. It is especially difficult for Latino students given that one of two are low-income (compared to less than one out of 10 White students).

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2003*

Policy Solutions

Develop an “education tracking system,” a seamless state database stratified by regions and counties to follow students from high school through college. The database would build on the current THECB accountability system.

Establish and fund “college transition community centers” to ease the transition from high school to college and link PK-20 schools with the community and businesses. Using a “learning communities model,” these community-based student and parent outreach and recruitment centers would provide information concerning admissions, financial aid, concurrent enrollment, scholarships and employment opportunities in partnership with high schools, colleges, universities and libraries. They would also serve as “bridge” academies for first generation college students.

Encourage and fund partnerships with business communities that guarantee internships and employment opportunities for students in emerging employment areas.

Affordability

Quick Facts

Texas earns a “D” in affordability in the state report card. Low-and middle-income students have to bear 40 percent of their family’s income for a public four-year college and 30 percent of the annual family income for a community college.

– *National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004*

The steepest increases in public college tuition have been imposed during times of greatest economic hardship.

– *National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002*

Over the past 10 years, tuition at Texas public two-year institutions increased 29 percent and tuition at Texas public four-year institutions increased 63 percent while the median family income in Texas increased only 8 percent.

– *National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002*

Policy Solutions

Make student funding need-based as well as merit-based.

Increase state funding for the Texas Work Study program.

Designate monies specifically for critical shortage areas, such as engineering, science and mathematics in order to increase the number of professionals in those areas (parallel to the National Defense Student Loan).

Offer free tuition for the first two years of college.

Institutional Resources

Quick Facts

Texas has not met its target in total research and development dollars. However, the University of Texas system has the largest endowment in the state with over \$8 billion and is the top fundraiser.

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, July 2004*

Policy Solutions

Establish a weighted allocation for institutional needs and characteristics, including growth, unique rural and border needs.

Provide additional institutional resources for first-year students that include targeted funding for smaller class sizes, appropriate coursework and more advisors.

Graduation

Quick Facts

More than half of Texas college students (52 percent) take six years to graduate. Texas has the greatest number of NCAA Division 1 institutions in the nation and the greatest number of its institutions in the bottom 10 percent of graduation rates.

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, July 2004*

Thirteen out of 19 public universities in Texas graduate less than half of their students; six graduate less than a third.

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, July 2004*

Policy Solutions

Create state college and university graduation rate goals and report annual progress.

Create loan forgiveness programs for graduates who return to work in the local community.

Give greater weight to graduation rates (fourth, fifth and sixth year) in the college and university accountability system.

Graduate and Professional Studies

Quick Facts

The number of doctoral degrees decreased by 0.25 percent from 2,621 in 2000 to 2,577 in 2003.

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, July 2004*

If all ethnic groups had the same educational attainment and earnings as Whites, total personal income in the state would be about \$31.4 billion higher, and the state would realize an estimated \$11 billion in additional tax revenues.

– *National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004*

Policy Solutions

Develop targets for increasing the number and percentage of minority faculty in higher education.

Create graduate school transition academies with guaranteed funding for students going to medical and law schools. Create articulation academies between undergraduate and graduate schools and two-year and four-year institutions of higher education (example of reverse transfer).

Expand Top 10 Percent Plan to include graduate and professional studies.

Earmark monies that are designated for graduate and professional school recruitment.

Expand loan forgiveness programs to graduate and postgraduate work.

Establish “Closing the Gaps” goals for graduate and professional programs.