

# Identifying Barriers and Seeking Solutions for Latinx and Hispanic Students in Higher Education



## Thesis

Latinx and Hispanic students face barriers in the realm of higher education, including but not limited to; a lack of institutional and familial support, financial hardship, and societal stereotypes. As such, systemic and institutional changes must occur and be consistent for Latinx and Hispanic students to attain academic success.

## Goals

- Gain an understanding of the challenges faced by Latinx and Hispanic students in higher education, specifically in SUNY Geneseo.
- Use the information and data collected from recent articles, studies, and SUNY Geneseo students to formulate solutions for Latinx and Hispanic students in higher education.

## Methods

### SUNY Geneseo Student, Faculty, and Student Leader Interviews

- Student interview responses received via Google Forms
- Faculty and student leader interviews conducted in person
- 12 Student Participants
- 1 Admissions Counselor
- 1 Student Leader

### Online Research

- Analyzed peer reviewed and scholarly articles
- Analyzed statistics from reliable sources

## Education

### Sample Student Interview Responses

- “I feel welcomed but not like I belong here as some do. As a transfer student and living off campus for the last two years I didn’t get involved much just because I had to work and went home every weekend due to other responsibilities. I do feel safe regarding my ethnic and racial background.”
- “My school and community prepared me well for high education because I was offered a variety of AP courses with good instructors. My family prepared me academically, as they always encouraged me to do very well in school and to study hard. However, due to the degree of difficulty, family could never help with my homework questions. I feel the culture I was raised in caused an increased level of preparation because there is great pressure to work hard and succeed. To elaborate, this was especially ingrained in my mind because my mother is an immigrant from Ecuador.”
- “They didn’t really say much or help except “you got this!” But I’m a first gen student so I still have no idea what I’m doing most of the time. I don’t know anyone who has gone through college within the last couple recent years that I can ask for help cause most people who I know that went to college were my teachers, but they never explained anything to us.”
- “I have faced microaggression but mainly from students so although it has affected my mental health slightly, I have not experienced any discrimination from faculty. Rather than a language barrier I would say a vocabulary barrier. Many times, I find myself confused on what my peers or faculty are discussing because I have never heard certain things before like programs or certain expectations.”
- “The main financial difficulty was that my parents had no way to pay for school because they did not make a lot of money. While financial aid did help a bit, I couldn’t get a loan as my parents don’t really have credit history and I don’t make enough for a financial institution to feel safe enough to provide me a loan without a co-signer so as a result, I’ve had to pay for school out of my own pocket.”
- “Yes! It has completely impacted my college experience because I feel like I walked into college blindfolded which sucks because I feel like I could’ve done so much more if I had known more things about college. I had to figure a lot of things out along the way that other people already knew because their parents or siblings who already went to college already told them about. But I can at least help my younger brother since he recently started college, so he doesn’t have to go through most of what I went through.”



## Admissions Counselor: Christie Smith

- “There is no one way to recruit a student and no one size fits all model in higher education.”
- “Everyone should feel like campus is home”
- Member of the 5<sup>th</sup> HLI Cohort
- Leader in expanding and strengthening SUNY Geneseo ethnic and racial demographics
- Believes in application of “Need Based Model”
- Working on free bus trip visits to SUNY Geneseo for prospective students of color

## Key Terms and Definitions

**Latinx** : A newly adopted term, used primarily by higher education students and institutions, that captures multiple intersectional identities of those with Latin American origins.

**HLI**: “Hispanic Leadership Institute” consisting of faculty and staff members from multiple SUNY campuses. The HLI oversees developing and supporting Hispanic and Latinx Students across the SUNY system.

**Need Based Model**: A merit-based model for financial aid in higher education which pit more money on the table for financially in need students.

## Gabrielle Joseph and Faculty Advisor Professor Wesley Costa de Moraes

### Student Leader: Rocio Ruiz

- “There is a lot of fear in the college enrollment process for many Hispanic families due to lack of experience with the process and the close-knit nature of Hispanic families.”
- Intern with the Office of Admissions at SUNY Geneseo
- Resident Assistant for Diversity and Inclusion Community Educator (RADICE)
- Gives campus tours in Spanish
- Hosts student and parent panels for potential students of color



## Key Points

- Latinx and Hispanic culture emphasizes “family first.”
- Latinx and Hispanic students are more likely to drop out of higher education than any other group.
- Financial aid systems often fail Latinx and Hispanic students.
- In order to overcome barriers, different and intersectional identities must be recognized, and students must be “met in their communities.”

## Higher Education Statistics (September 2021)

- 27.1% undergraduate students are Latino
- 60% of Latino students face financial hurdles
- 44% of Latinos are first-generation college students
- 85% of matriculated Latino students attend public institutions



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