

# THE REVOLVING DOOR OF EDUCATION: RETAINING FIRST-GENERATION LATINX STUDENTS DURING THE FIRST TWO YEARS AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY EAST BAY



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## Abstract

Although the United States is in the middle of an unprecedented growth of the Latinx population/community, the numbers are not translating into higher academic achievement rates, particularly in higher education. First-generation, Latinx students continue to be the most underachieving ethnic group in the nation with higher dropout rates than their non-Latinx counterparts. An inability to improve these academic retention and graduation statistics will perpetuate current societal inequities and prevent this growing social group from bettering their socio-economic position by furthering their education.

## Problem/Focus

Data shows that first generation, Latinx students continue to be the most underachieving group in the nation within the higher education setting.

Lack of access to prior knowledge and information

Subpar college preparation

Limited belief in their "worthiness"

Lack of intentional support system in higher education

## Literature Review

❑ **Access**—Latinx students are negatively impacted due to lack of access to prior knowledge, information and opportunity.

❑ **College Preparation**—Latinx students are often steered in other directions (trade schools, work) by K-12 administrators operating from a deficit model perspective. Often they are steered away from AP courses and end up in college remedial courses.

❑ **University Support**—a disenfranchised group needs an intentional approach to avoid the imposter syndrome. Creating a sense of belonging is critical for retention.

❑ **Community Cultural Wealth**—Latinx students may lack social capital, they can access intrinsic "wealth" from their life experience (bilingual, perseverance, etc.)

## Conceptual Frame

➤ **Social Capital**—social "currency" that provides those who have it with a distinct advantage

➤ **Critical Race Theory**—used to illuminate the historical systemic barriers that have impacted Latino students

➤ **Transitional Support**—acknowledges the need for additional support during transitional periods including moving from high school to college

## Methodology

- Qualitative Interview Study
- Semi-structured questions
- Interview students in 2<sup>nd</sup> year
- Interview students DQ'd in 1<sup>st</sup> year

What internal, social/interpersonal and institutional resources are 1<sup>st</sup> gen Latinx students accessing to help them persist through 1<sup>st</sup> year of college?

How does the K-12 educational pathway impact college persistence for 1<sup>st</sup> gen Latinx students?

## Findings

### Institutional Resources

- Value of K12 academic enrichment programs
- Learning communities
- Transitional support programs

### Interpersonal/Social Resources

- Cohort models
- Adult mentors in college
- Early exposure to college expectations

### Internal Resources

- Familial/community support
- Sense of belonging/offset imposter syndrome
- Learned resiliency and perseverance

## Discussion

Attaining an educational degree has been recognized as a gateway for improving socio-economic status for some time. The fact that the Latinx community is the largest growing social group in the United States, guiding more first-generation Latinx students successfully through the educational pipeline is critical in order to meet the future work demands of the country (Yosso, 2006). Based on the findings from this interview study, coupled with the analysis of the university data sets, there is a demonstrated need for CSUEB to take a more critical look at a few current and upcoming policies and practices in order to reverse the high non-retention rates for first-generation Latinx students during their first two years of college.

## Recommendations

### Onboarding 1<sup>st</sup> Year Students

- University-wide commitment to new student orientation outcomes
- Flexible learning cluster model
- Mandatory intrusive advising

### Student Support Programs

- Increase GE department staffing
- Opt-out assigned campus mentors
- Expand/duplicate STEP for first year students

### Cultural Shift

- Become a student-ready campus
- Maximize University Hour
- Increase on-campus student jobs

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