

DO WE NEED TARGETED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS?

Demographic shifts are changing the landscape of the United States and the implications of these changes for American society are significant, particularly in education. Census data from March 2002 show that there are 37.4 million Hispanics in the United States, comprising 13.3 percent of the American population. Now the largest minority group, this population is younger (one third of Hispanics are under age 18), less educated (27% of those over age 25 have less than a ninth-grade education), poorer and more often unemployed (8.1% of those over age 16 lack jobs).

Like other minorities, Hispanics see community colleges as gateways to the American dream and have enrolled in far greater numbers over the past few years. These colleges are expected to educate people for effective participation in the workforce and civic life, as well as transmitting American values to new members of U. S. society. Therefore, they have an obligation to respond to the new demographics by offering programs and services that meet the needs of a more diverse student body. They must also employ highly qualified and diverse faculty and staff who can deliver these services and serve as role models for all students.

Unfortunately, at the moment there are very limited numbers of Hispanic educators to engage in this effort. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education reported that in 1999, only 4,900 Hispanics were employed in higher education executive/administrative/managerial positions out of a total 154,000. Only about 1,000 of those Hispanic educators were in such positions in community colleges. Further, with the expected "bulge" in retirements among senior administrators and faculty, many of those Latino/a educators will leave, and there is great concern that few Hispanics are "in the pipeline" to replace them.

To address the lack of Hispanic community college leaders, the National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC) was awarded a Ford Foundation grant (1990-1995) to offer a professional development program for those aspiring to positions as executive administrators and community college presidents. The program curriculum covered community college operations,

interviewing skills, career planning and building a professional network, among other topics. A total of 72 Fellows who were vice presidents, deans and directors participated over the five years of the grant. Twenty-five (20 current and 5 former CEOs) have become chancellors, presidents, campus provosts/deans/CEOs or vice chancellors. This is approximately 20 percent of all Hispanic community college CEOs in the United States.

In summer 2003, a survey of these NCCHC Fellows was conducted to determine the career paths they had taken and their perceptions of the value of the training program over time. They were also asked whether professional development programs targeted specifically to Hispanics were of value. Of the original 72 Fellows, current addresses were found for 54. Survey forms were sent to these 54 and 18 responses have been returned to date. The respondents' current positions range from chancellor and vice-chancellor to presidents, vice presidents, deans and directors.

While only preliminary results are available at present, some trends are noteworthy. Of the 18 respondents, 12 reported one or more promotions or job changes to a higher level in another institution. Eleven of these had become a chancellor or president. As noted above, of the original 72 Fellows, 20 are now presidents and 5 were presidents in the recent past.

Survey respondents were asked what new knowledge, insights and skills they had gained from the Fellows experience. Most listed a number of areas related to executive responsibilities in a college, such as fund-raising, visioning, strategic planning and Board/CEO relations. These were new skills sets for them at the time of the training since they were at lower administrative levels.

When asked what component(s) of the training they had applied most often, the 18 respondents cited process skills such as relationship building, networking, participatory leadership, communication, interviewing and variations of these. All of them noted that they had kept in touch with other Fellows and the senior administrators and presidents who had served as faculty. These relationships had been used to help with career moves and gain information about

community colleges across the country. Many of the Fellows had also attended the annual NCCHC Leadership Symposium regularly for continued professional development and networking. When asked what their greatest achievements were since attending the Fellows program, many listed completing their doctorates and/or attaining their first presidency. These respondents also noted that the skills they had learned served them well in difficult situations such as workforce reductions or major campus crises.

All of the respondents indicated that there was value in leadership development programs specifically for Latinos/as. While some acknowledged the importance of attending a variety of programs in order to continue their professional growth, they stated that meeting and interacting with Hispanics who were already college presidents and national leaders was inspiring. They further noted that there were issues and barriers faced by Hispanics that needed to be addressed in a homogeneous group. As one respondent commented: "Leadership programs specifically for Latinos are crucial. Role models and influence of culture are major strengths of such programs." Another said: "Latinos are tested in ways that are different, and being prepared will help us to handle situations and to recognize challenges and how to take charge in a composed and professional way."

Since the end of the Ford-funded NCCHC Fellows Program, there have been no formal training options specifically for Hispanics aspiring to become community college leaders. In recognition of the continuing need for Hispanic educational leaders (The American Council of Education reported in 2001 that only 3.1% of all college and university presidents are Hispanic), NCCHC decided recently to revive its Fellows Program and begin training a new generation for presidential roles.

Twelve NCCHC Leadership Fellows were selected for participation in the 2003 cohort, representing community colleges in North Carolina, Florida, New York, Texas, Illinois, California and Arizona. The new Fellows recently completed the formal part of the year-long training program, engaging in seminars on leadership skills, strategic planning, public relations, legal

issues, government relations, fund-raising, Board/CEO relations, conflict resolution and other topics. Most of these areas were cited in an ACE study as top issues occupying presidents' time in 2001. Other components of the training are development of an individualized plan of action for upward mobility; regular online communications; a "shadowing" experience at a community college and mentoring by a Hispanic community college president. In evaluating their experience so far, the new Fellows have commended many of the same elements that respondents of the previous Fellows program valued. In particular, they recognized the importance of placing such training in the context of their own culture and felt that the connections they established with their cohort and Latino/a community college leaders would have the most impact on their future activities and achievements.

The high rate (35%) of appointments to community college presidencies among the previous 72 NCCHC Fellows is a strong indicator that such training programs work. More to the point, the Fellows found real value in preparing for these leadership roles in a homogeneous group where cultural issues could be incorporated and addressed. Finally, the willingness of many of these Latino/a leaders to become involved in the new NCCHC Leadership Fellows Program as distinguished faculty and mentors speaks to the importance of targeted leadership development experiences that both teach skills and form strong networks.

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