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Latinos & California Community Colleges: An Update

By Lisa Chavez

The Center for Latino Policy Research will soon release a policy report that will describe the enrollment, course-taking patterns, transfer rates, and four-year college destinations of Latino California community college students. This report will also explore the roles of region, gender and community college performance in campus destinations for Latino students who successfully transfer to the University of California. This research brief describes preliminary results of the regional analysis.

In fall 2000, a total of 40,554 Latinos entered a California community college as first-time freshmen and nearly three-fourths were concentrated in Southern California (see Table 1). The number of Latino students statewide nearly doubled between 1990 and 2000 and their representation among all first-time freshmen reached 31 percent. Their enrollment in Southern California campuses more than doubled during this time period and their representation reached 37 percent. Northern California's growth in Latino students was slightly less than double but Latino representation increased to 22 percent. Different areas of the state experienced more growth than others. In 1990, Latinos represented 30 percent or more of the first-time freshmen in only one area – Los Angeles. By the year 2000, seven sub-

regions of the state served first-time freshmen where Latinos represented 30 percent or more. Although the Los Angeles area served an exceptionally high number of

Latino students in 2000 (13,545 students across 21 community college campuses), its growth in Latino students was relatively modest compared with other areas such

TABLE 1

Latino First-Time Freshmen Age 19 and Younger Enrolled in a California Community College by Region: Fall 1990 – Fall 2000

	Fall 1990		Fall 2000	
	# Latino	% Latino	# Latino	% Latino
Southern California				
Los Angeles	8,005	30%	13,545	41%
San Diego-Imperial	2,012	22%	3,733	36%
Orange County	1,725	15%	4,532	34%
Inland Empire	1,490	23%	3,704	35%
South San Joaquin Valley	895	24%	2,053	38%
Central Coast	697	13%	2,267	27%
Total Southern California	14,824	23%	29,834	37%
Northern California				
San Francisco Bay	2,913	13%	4,334	19%
North San Joaquin Valley	1,637	23%	4,127	35%
Sacramento-Tahoe	584	8%	1,081	13%
Monterey Bay	499	24%	787	32%
Upper Sacramento Valley	80	9%	185	12%
North Coast	56	7%	105	10%
Superior California	38	5%	101	7%
Total Northern California	5,807	14%	10,720	22%
Latino Statewide Total	20,631	20%	40,554	31%

Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission online data system



as Orange County, Central Coast, North San Joaquin Valley and Superior California that experienced a doubling in the enrollment of Latino first-time freshmen.

Table 2 describes the campus destinations of Latino students who transferred to the University of California during the academic year of 2003-2004 in comparison to all transfers from the same region. A total of 1,381 Latino community college students from Southern California transferred to a UC campus compared with only 541 from Northern California. UCLA, one of the state's flagship campuses, was the top destination for Latinos from Southern California (33 percent) as it was for all transfers from that region (31 percent). In contrast, one third of Northern California Latino transfers enrolled in UC Davis, a campus that was also the top destination for all transfers from Northern California (32 percent). Berkeley was the next top destination for both Latino and all transfer students from Northern California.

The vast majority of Latinos from Southern California transferred to a local campus (Irvine, UCLA, Riverside, San Diego and Santa Barbara), following a similar pattern as all transfers in the southland. The same was true for Latinos from Northern California – the vast majority transferred to Berkeley, Davis or Santa Cruz. Berkeley attracted eight percent of Southern California Latinos to its campus while a full ten percent of Northern California Latinos left their region to attend UCLA.

UCLA has historically been and remains the top campus for Latino community college transfer students. The significant numerical presence of Latinos among Southern California community college students as well as their tendency

to remain in their home region of the state appears to contribute to this. Institutional factors surely play a role; transfer and course-articulation agreements between UC and students and community college campuses are more often undertaken at the local-level. However, UCLA also attracts many Latino transfer students from Northern California. This suggests that UCLA holds a particular appeal to Latino students. The forthcoming CLPR report will explore these issues in depth and will include additional contextual analyses that consider UC application, admit and matriculation rates for Latino community college transfer students. ■

TABLE 2

UC Campus Destinationns of Fall 2003-Spring 2004
Community College Transfers by California Region

	Southern California		Northern California	
	Latino Transfers	Total Transfers	Latino Transfers	Total Transfers
Berkeley	8%	8%	21%	24%
Davis	3%	2%	33%	32%
Irvine	13%	16%	3%	3%
UCLA	33%	31%	10%	11%
Riverside	14%	9%	2%	2%
San Diego	11%	17%	5%	10%
Santa Barbara	13%	14%	8%	6%
Santa Cruz	4%	3%	18%	13%
Total Transfers to UC System*	100% 1,381	100% 7,781	100% 541	100% 4,790

*may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission online data system



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Lisa Chavez is a Research Associate at CLPR. Lisa received her Ph.D. in Sociology from UC Berkeley. A third generation Californian, she is committed to conducting policy-relevant research that contributes to the expansion of educational opportunities for students in her home state.

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