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Community College Case Study: Exploring Transfer Outcomes for Latinos

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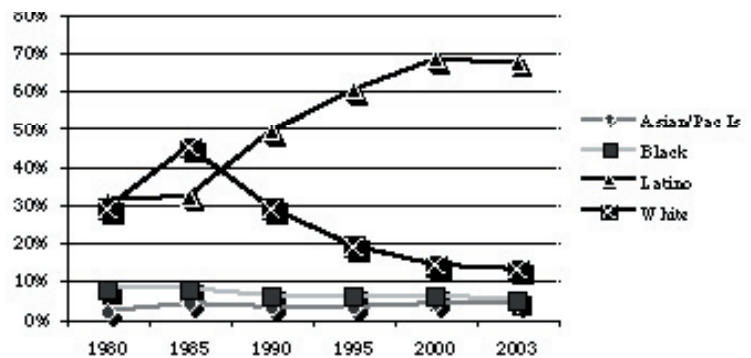
California community colleges with high proportions of Latino students are potential sources for increasing diversity at the University of California provided they equip students with the necessary resources in order to successfully transfer. Los Angeles Mission College (LAMC) is one such potential source of Latino students. This southern California campus has undergone a shift from a predominately White student population to now a majority Latino student population within a time span of twenty-three years (see Figure 1).

Located in the northeast sector of the San Fernando Valley, LAMC is situated in a predominately low-income Latino community and serves thousands of Latino high school graduates from two of the most overcrowded public high schools in the San Fernando Valley - San Fernando High School and Sylmar High School. Using student-level data from the 1996 first-time freshmen cohort at LAMC, two research questions framed this research project: 1) what are the educational goals of Latino students at LAMC? and, 2) how successful are LAMC Latino students at transferring to a four-year college if their academic goals begin with transferring?

Student Goals and Transfer Findings at LAMC:

The educational goals of students at LAMC varied by ethnicity. Latinos were least likely to identify transfer to a four-year college as their primary educational goal while Asians were most likely. Almost half of all Asians (45 percent) identified transfer as their educational goal while only 20 percent of all of Latinos did so. In contrast, Latinos were more likely to identify non-transfer goals

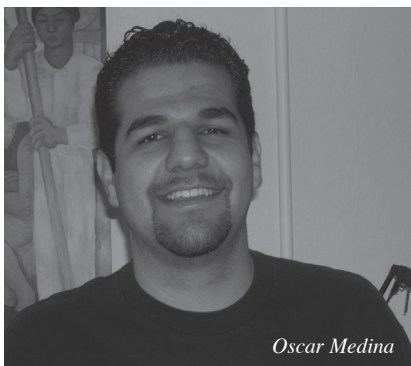
Figure 1. Los Angeles Mission College Student Enrollment, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2003 by Ethnicity.



Source: California Community College Chancellor's Office, Expanded Student Right-To-Know Dataset.

such as the pursuit of vocational certificates or simply obtaining a two-year Associate Arts degree.

Interesting to note, only 50 percent of the LAMC students that successfully transferred to a four-year college or university began their studies with the goal of transferring. The other 50 percent initially had other goals (e.g. prepare for new career, vocational certificate, receive an Associate Arts degree, undecided, etc.), yet successfully sought a transfer path. The pattern is similar for the Latinos who transferred: 48 percent indicated their goal was to transfer while the remaining 52 percent had non-transfer goals.



Oscar Medina

About the Author...

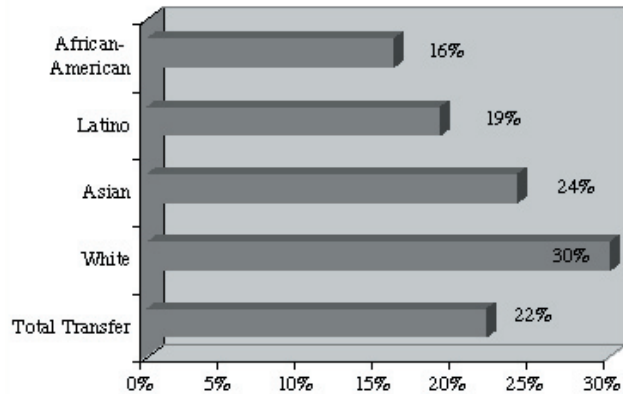
Oscar Medina, a senior at UC Berkeley as well as an undergraduate assistant at CLPR, conducted a case study of Los Angeles Mission College for his senior thesis in Chicano Studies using data provided to CLPR by the California Community College Chancellor's Office. He began this project as a participant in the UC Berkeley 2005 Student Research Opportunity Program (SROP) under the mentorship of Professor David Montejano. The article below highlights some of his findings.

The students who eventually transferred to a four-year college despite entering LAMC with non-transfer goals represent, somewhat, the accessibility of transfer opportunities at this institution but also demonstrate the complexities of predicting the determinants of successful transfer outcomes for Latinos in community colleges.

In light of these findings, LAMC is not providing a pathway for its students interested in attending a four-year college or university. An essential recommendation after completing this investigation is to advise the board of administration and faculty at LAMC to further scrutinize the transfer function and communicate with students in order to assist them towards the pipeline that makes community college an instrumental site of access.

**For the full case study please contact: Oscar Medina,
email: omedina@berkeley.edu ■**

Figure 2. 1996 Cohort Transfer Outcomes Among Students Whose Goal was to Transfer to a Four-year College.



Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission, On-line Data System

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