

The San Diego Chicano/Latino Concilio on Higher Education Priorities & Strategies 2021

The San Diego Chicano/Latino Concilio on Higher Education is a coalition of alumni, faculty, and staff of local postsecondary institutions. For over thirty years, our Concilio has monitored the access and success of Chicano students at such institutions. While much of society has increased its focus on racial inequity during the past year, for inexplicable reasons Chicanos have often been excluded from discussion of institutional racism. The great Chicano historian Rodolfo Acuña documented the decades of violent racism against Chicanos in sites such as Southern California before and after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 effectively ended the war between Mexico and the U.S. The subsequent decades saw massive land theft, lynchings, and the complete subjugation of Chicanos to a source of unskilled labor for white colonialists. Incredibly, much of California's population is ignorant of this history, believing instead that most Chicanos just arrived in the U.S. yesterday and are an "immigrant community."

The decades-long K-12 inequities impacting Chicanos/Latinos exist in higher education. In The Latino Education Crisis (2009), Chicana scholars Patricia Rendon and Frances Contreras documented those inequities and emphasized their long-term impact on an aging society that requires an increasingly educated labor force. That pattern of inequity is manifested in the colleges and universities in San Diego County.

Chicano/Latino educators know the solutions to underachievement among our students. From Chicana scholars such as Gina Garcia, Sylvia Hurtado and Laura Rendon, we know that enrolling a student body with a representative degree of Chicano/Latino students contributes to their achievement. We also know that "validation" of Chicano/Latino students through a strong representation of Chicano/Latino faculty, culturally inclusive classroom pedagogy and support services, and a well funded Chicano/Latino Studies department contribute to Chicano/Latino students' success.

Despite this research, our higher education institutions often lack the will to construct supportive conditions. Data presented at the San Diego Latino Education Summit in February 2020 shows that Chicano/Latino students at universities such as SDSU and UCSD still graduate at a level lower than that of white students. SDSU has made much greater strides in enrolling a critical mass of Chicano/Latino students, reaching thirty percent while UCSD maintains a Chicano/Latino student body of only twenty percent of enrollment in a state in which our ethnic community makes up forty percent of the California population. Chicano/Latino tenure-track faculty make up less than ten percent of SDSU's faculty and only six percent of UCSD faculty. While SDSU does have a full department of Chicana & Chicano Studies, UCSD has only a small, unsupported Latinx Studies program without its own faculty. Among local community colleges, Mesa College and City College are among the only campuses to implement a Chicano Studies department. Community colleges such as Southwestern, Miramar, Mira Costa, Grossmont, and Cuyamaca do not have a Chicano/Latino Studies department.

We have also observed that a successful educational experience for Chicanos/Latinos in colleges and universities, including the development of students' social consciousness and commitment to social justice, is more likely when institutions feature Chicano/Latino leadership.

In San Diego, San Diego State leads the way with a Chicana president and Chicano provost. The San Diego Community College District now has a Latino chancellor and Southwestern College has a Latino president. However, such leadership is lacking at most local institutions. UCSD has had only one Chicano/Latino vice chancellor in its entire history and currently has none along with no *Raza* college provosts. Likewise, none of UCSD six colleges is named for a Chicano although local community advocates have recommended such a naming for at least ten years.

Without an equitable enrollment of Chicano/Latino students, which would constitute between thirty and forty percent for San Diego institutions, as well as an equitable degree of Chicano/Latino faculty and a well supported Chicano/Latino Studies department, our local, public colleges and universities are not fulfilling their responsibility to the *Raza* community. Local advocates such as the San Diego Chicano/Latino Concilio on Higher Education have recommended that San Diego community colleges and universities centralize the responsibility for Chicano/Latino student success on their campus. Too often, campuses have an array of underfunded services that are disconnected and often fail to reach out to Chicano/Latino students. Thus, their diffuse efforts are largely ineffective.

While there is progress in narrowing the gap in high school graduation rates between Chicano/Latino and white students, graduating from high school is not enough. For many Chicano/Latino students, college enrollment is insufficient unless it leads to transfer to a selective university that facilitates graduation and matriculation to graduate or professional school. White students have enjoyed this privilege for decades. It's now time for our community to enjoy the privilege as well.