

The Status of Local Chicanos/Latinos in our Public Institutions of Higher Education

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The San Diego Chicano/Latino Concilio on Higher Education, or San Diego Concilio, is a coalition of faculty, staff and students that has advocated for access and success among Chicanos/Latinos in our local colleges and universities for over thirty years.

In early 2021, after establishing a dialogue with most of the colleges and universities in San Diego County, our San Diego Concilio began to document the current status of local Chicanos/Latinos in these local institutions. We requested data from each of the three public universities and eight community colleges in San Diego. Our entire request was for public, not confidential, information. The content of our request reflects six areas related to access and success for Chicano/Latino students: (1) institutional mission and leadership, (2) student enrollment, (3) student success, (4) faculty composition, (5) Chicano/Latino Studies, and (6) campus law enforcement. Our objective is to inform our community about the state of local Chicano participation in higher education and hold our local institutions accountable.

We hoped that these public institutions would recognize and acknowledge their accountability to the local Chicano/Latino community by providing the requested data. Instead, only one institution, San Diego State University, made a substantive effort to respond to our request. One public university, UC San Diego, that has historically failed to equitably reflect our Chicano/Latino community in its enrollment, faculty, curriculum, and leadership, refused to submit any response. The other public, local university, Cal State San Marcos, responded to most of our request. The eight community colleges submitted incomplete information.

This failure by most of our local colleges and universities to respond to a request for public information indicates that local higher education institutions are not monitoring the conditions that contribute to our Chicano/Latino students' success. This is despite an unfortunate history of racism against Chicanos/Latinos that results in institutional exclusion, neglect, and hindering conditions that contribute to their underachievement in higher education.

The irony is that all but one of these public colleges and universities has achieved Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) status, meaning that their student enrollment is at least 25 percent Chicano/Latino. The Latina scholar Gina Garcia emphatically states that achieving HSI status signals an urgent priority for those institutions to construct campus conditions that maximize Chicano/Latino student success. How can our public higher education institutions provide such supportive conditions when they fail to monitor the degree to which they respond to our students' needs?

Despite the sadly incomplete responses we received, our Concilio reached some conclusions about the status of local Chicanos/Latinos in higher education from the data and information that these institutions provided us. Except for UCSD, it appears that Chicano/Latino undergraduate enrollment at local public colleges and universities reflects our representation in the county's population.

Only SDSU and CSUSM submitted data indicating that equitable service to Chicanos/Latinos is embedded in their institutional mission. However, except for Cuyamaca Community College, our local institutions have not hired a representative level of

Chicano/Latino leadership. While all these institutions except for UCSD describe programs to maximize Chicano/Latino students' success, there is no evidence of their effective coordination and adequate funding. Moreover, we do not have evidence that our public colleges and universities provide a well-funded Chicano/Latino Studies department, or that they hire an equitable representation of Chicano/Latino faculty across academic disciplines. Likewise, at a time when law enforcement practices are of national concern, critical data on law enforcement practices and their impact on Latinos is missing.

Chicanos/Latinos are not a recent immigrant group or a numerically marginal community. We represent over 30 percent of San Diego County, over 40 percent of California, and over 50 percent of the states' K-12 students. Our community's educational standing is critical for ourselves and the entire state's social and economic future.

Our Concilio is disseminating reports on each of these six critical dimensions that indicate the status of local Chicanos/Latinos in higher education. We will unequivocally call upon our institutions to improve their accountability to our community by constructing more supportive conditions for our students. We also call on state legislators, and especially the Latino Legislative Caucus, that help determine the degree of public funding for these institutions, to hold them accountable as well.

