

*Men and Masculinities***RE (DEFINING) THE SUCCESS OF MEN AT A RESEARCH-INTENSIVE EMERGING HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTION****Jesse Enriquez***Doctoral Student*

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Historically, the bulk of the research on Latino/x³ men in college has focused on their underachievement during, underrepresentation in, or departure from higher education (Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, & Villegas, 2009; Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009). In their seminal article, Sáenz and Ponjuán (2009) proclaimed that “Latino males are vanishing from the higher education pipeline” (p. 2). More recently, scholars have intentionally moved away from deficit-oriented perspectives and have documented the factors that lead to resilience, college persistence, and success for these students (e.g., Lopez, 2005; Pérez & Sáenz, 2017).

In this article we highlight one approach—summer bridge programs (SBPs)—that has the potential to support Latino/x men to academically thrive at a research-intensive institution as well as provide them with strong peer and social networks. SBPs introduce college students to the

³ Unless directly citing other research, we use the term Latino/x to be inclusive of these multiple identities. The term Latinx aims to be inclusive of people who do not identify with the gender binary of masculinity (Latino) and femininity (Latina; Salinas & Lozano, 2017).

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college environment and provide a seamless transition from high school to college (Sablan, 2014). Findings from our study support previous research that concluded that low-income students of color who participated in an SBP experienced statistically significant increases in academic self-efficacy and perceived academic skills (Sablan, 2014; Strayhorn, 2011).

Data for this study were captured from a larger research project that sought to better understand the college transition experiences of students of color who participated in an SBP in the Southwest. This article focuses on the experiences of 10 high-achieving Latino/x men who gained admission to a selective research-intensive institution, participated in the SBP, and persisted through their first year of college. Like Pérez and Taylor (2015), we challenge dominant narratives that portray Latino/x students as not

invested in their higher education aspirations, academically underprepared for the rigor of college, and more likely to drop out. We employ an asset-based perspective that focuses on the successful enrollment, transition, and persistence of Latino/x college students at an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

College Readiness and Transition of Latino/x Men

It is well documented that Latino/x men are more likely to forgo college to join the unskilled workforce (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009), enlist in the military (Huerta, 2015), and become tracked into the school-to-prison pipeline. Even when Latino/x students have high aspirations to attend college, school educators categorize them as “noncollege material,” and they often enroll in less selective institutions (Swail, Cabrera, & Lee, 2004). Contrary to these findings, our research found that Latino/x collegians were well informed about their college choices, strategically planned for college, and had high postsecondary educational goals. They also participated in rigorous academic programs in high school (e.g., honors, advanced placement) that prepared them to apply to highly selective colleges and universities.

Bolstering Academic Self-Efficacy in Summer Bridge

The Latino/x men in our study were academically prepared for the rigor of a research-intensive university, countering the deficit framing that non-diverse faculty use when describing students of color (Turner, 2015). Enrolling in credit-bearing courses during the summer exposed students to college-level coursework and the academic rigor of a selective institution. Providing academic supports further enhanced their confidence and sense of academic belonging.

Summer Bridge: Investing in Students to Thrive at a Research-Intensive University

Although the primary goal of SBPs is to increase the retention rates, persistence, and graduation rates of program participants, they should not be an academic endeavor alone. Transformative SBPs address both academic and nonacademic components of college preparation (Slade, Eatmon, Staley, & Dixon, 2015). According to our participants, the five-week intensive SBP created opportunities to support meaningful and authentic interaction, and Latino

“brotherhood ties.” They stated that experiencing “dorm life” with peers as well as participating in social bonding and network opportunities were critical building blocks to establishing a brotherhood, sense of familia.

Participants reinforced the importance of incorporating both academic and nonacademic activities that cultivate peer networks, which are sustained into the school year. Participants had an opportunity to build community, friendships, and social networks that enhanced their confidence and comfort level upon entering college. In addition, when Latino/x students were asked if the SBP improved their sense of belonging on campus, more than 75% of them responded with either “Always” or “Most of the Time.”

Recommendations for Practice

Student affairs practitioners may consider the following practices when developing comprehensive transition programs that serve Latino/x men and other historically underserved student populations at selective research-intensive HSIs or emerging HSIs:

1. Offer credit-bearing courses over the summer with appropriate academic supports and resources.
2. Develop cocurricular activities that give students an opportunity to develop strong friendships and support networks beyond the classroom.
3. Collaborate with campus-wide stakeholders (e.g., financial aid, tutoring services, community cultural centers) during summer programming to create a network of support for first-year students.
4. Infuse SBPs with culturally relevant curricula, programs, and faculty mentors, which will connect students to their cultures and identities early in their college careers.
5. Continue the support and structure of SBPs beyond the first two years, so students have academic and social support throughout the duration of their college experience.

Summer Bridge Programs Advance Asset-Based Frameworks

Summer Bridge Programs have the potential to advance asset-based frameworks and approaches, modeling promising practices that yield academic success and positive experiences for Latino/x men. In states such as California, public research institutions, particularly those designated as an HSI, must be responsive to the needs of their Latino/x student bodies (Contreras, 2018; 2019) as well as create infrastructures for them to thrive in college and beyond.

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