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Answering the Call: Hispanic-Serving Institutions as Leaders in the Quest for Access, Excellence, and Equity in American Higher Education

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## **Presidential Leadership: Improving Completion Rates of Latino Male Students at Texas Community Colleges**

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### **Abstract**

Enrollment rates for Latino male students continue to increase at community colleges; unfortunately, compared to their other racial and/or ethnic male counterparts they are less likely to earn a college credential or degree. This qualitative study explores the narratives of six presidents at Texas community colleges designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions. We asked these presidents to describe their perceptions of their institution's awareness and commitment to improve degree completion outcomes of Latino male students. We utilized cultural and social-cognition theories to help understand how these presidents may change or shift their institution's efforts to address this pressing issue. Based on the findings, three key themes emerged that described how these leaders perceived their respective institution. Our findings suggest these presidents are concerned with the low completion rates for Latino male students; however, their institutions need to better align their institution's core values, mission, and culture to support educational outcomes of Latino male students. Lastly, we highlight how other community college presidents could enhance their institution's commitment to improve degree completion rates of Latino male students.

*Keywords:* Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Community Colleges, Presidents, Degree Completion, Latino Male Students

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## Introduction

Enrollment rates of Latino<sup>1</sup> male students continue to increase at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs)<sup>2</sup> and a majority of these institutions are classified as community colleges. Upon closer review of the degree completion rates of male students of color at community colleges, Latino male students compared to other male racial groups are less likely to earn a college credential or degree (Baber & Graham, 2015; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Scholars have noted that Latino male students often face unique challenges as they attempt to complete a community college credential or degree. For example, some scholars suggest these students may not be familiar with the financial aid process (Fry, 2002; Núñez & Kim, 2012; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011) and encounter difficulties balancing the demands of academics, family, and work obligations (Harris & Wood, 2013; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011). These students also tend to lack help-seeking behaviors due to *machismo* (e.g. cultural value that dictates Latino male behavior) (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009), which can stem from a fear of failing when confronted with challenges during their community college experience (Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodríguez, 2013).

While these earlier studies focused on exploring the challenges these students faced, other scholars explored how community colleges can help address these challenges. These institutions have the distinct responsibility of improving educational outcomes of Hispanic students. Scholars have indicated Hispanic students who enrolled at HSIs tend to have more positive experiences and outcomes (Laden, 2001, 2004; Laden, Hagedorn, & Perrakis, 2008; Núñez, Hurtado, & Galdeano, 2015; Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011) because these institutions create a physical space to increase their sense of belonging (Garcia, Patrón, Ramirez, & Hudson, 2016). Despite community colleges commitment to helping Latina/o students academically succeed, Latino male students still face challenges in completing a community college credential or degree in comparison to their male peers (Ponjuán, Palomín, & Calise, 2015). This may suggest that community colleges need to reevaluate how they are meeting the educational needs of these particular students.

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<sup>1</sup> We used Hispanic and Latina/o interchangeably based on the research cited.

<sup>2</sup> According to the federal definition, a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) is an eligible not-for profit institution with an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students, which is at least 25% Hispanic (US Department of Education, 2016).

Scholars have found that administrators and practitioners at Minority-Serving Institutions make important efforts to help students of color academically succeed (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015; Stanton-Salazar, Macias, Bensimon, & Dowd, 2010). More specifically, other scholars suggest that community college presidents should strategically focus their institutions to improve degree completion for an increasingly ethnically diverse student population (Eddy, 2010; Nevarez, Wood, & Penrose, 2013). In this case, community college presidents at HSIs lead their institution's core values, mission, and culture to ensure that Latino students complete a credential or degree. Although some studies focused on community college presidents' leadership styles, behaviors, and self-reflexivity, there is scant research on how their institutions address the specific needs of Latino male students. Therefore, we need to further examine how community college presidents at designated HSIs can lead their institutions to improve degree completion rates of Latino male students.

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college leaders perceive the efforts of their institutions to improve the education outcomes of Latino male students. Therefore, the research question guiding this qualitative research study was, "How do Texas community college presidents describe their institution's awareness and commitment to improving degree completion rates of Latino male students?" This study advances the research on Latino male students at community colleges by examining the role of community college presidents in addressing this critical educational issue. While there are some studies that have examined the leadership role of community college presidents, there is scant research on how these leaders address issues related to Latino male students at these types of institutions.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Understanding Community College Degree Completion of Latino Male Students**

Many Latino male students start their college careers at community colleges designated as HSIs (Núñez & Bowers, 2011; Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo, 2012; Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011). The complex nature of the degree completion issue of Latino male students revealed several factors that may delay their academic success. Scholars have found that the academic experiences of Latino male students can influence their persistence and graduation rates (Pérez & Taylor, 2015; Ross, Kena, Rathbun, KewalRamani, Zhang, Kristapovich, & Manning, 2012). This includes critically examining policies that may impede male students of color academic

progression. For instance, Latino male students placed in a developmental education curriculum often struggle with completing these courses (Acevedo-Gil, Santos, Alonso, & Solórzano, 2015; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Harris & Wood, 2013). Unfortunately, students who spend more time in developmental education courses are at a higher risk of becoming discouraged and dropping out since they are investing in non-college credit courses (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Harris & Wood, 2013).

Some scholars have also examined how community college faculty members are often not adequately prepared to address the unique learning styles of Latino male students. For example, scholars suggest that some Latino male students enrolled at community colleges experience negative interactions with some faculty members and often perceive them as unapproachable (Gardenshire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, Castro, MDRC & Achieving the Dream, 2010; Harris & Wood, 2013). As a result, these students are less likely to approach faculty members for assistance and utilize institutional academic support services (Cabrera, Rashwan-Soto, & Valencia, 2016). In contrast, some scholars have found that Latino male students had positive experiences with Hispanic faculty members at community colleges because they were aware of their academic needs, served as role models (Laden, 2001; Núñez et al., 2011), and they helped strengthen their racial and/or ethnic identities (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, & Plum, 2004).

Coupled with these varied educational experiences, other scholars have focused on institutional characteristics that may also contribute to degree completion rates of Latino male students. Scholars have started to focus on understanding how community colleges can address or ameliorate the potential barriers that Latino male students may face (Harris & Wood, 2013; Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011). A national report on the academic success of male students of color at community colleges found that male-focused programs provide specific support for these students (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014). Other institutional policies and practices that contribute to the academic success of Latino male students include improving the recruitment and retention of faculty members of color (Levin, Jackson-Boothby, Haberler, & Walker, 2015), and creating a campus-wide awareness of the unique educational experiences of Latino male students (Sáenz, Ponjuán, & Figueroa, 2016). However, we know less about how community college presidents can

shape, guide, and lead institutional efforts to address degree completion outcomes of Latino male students.

### **Community College Presidential Leadership and the Degree Completion Agenda**

Community college presidents, as a central figure and leader, play an important role when implementing institutional changes. For example, studies examining community college student success initiatives found that these efforts were highly dependent on a president's involvement (Zachry Rutschow, Richburg-Hayes, Brock, Orr, Cerna, & Cullinan, 2011). These presidents play an essential role in constructing a new message that clarifies how the institution will move forward (Eddy, 2010). Furthermore, new initiatives or institutional changes were more successful when presidents were in the forefront of developing and communicating the message to the campus community (Eddy, 2010; Zachry Rutschow et al., 2011).

Existing literature highlights the importance of understanding how leaders align their institutional mission and commit resources to create a culturally supportive environment for the increasingly racially and ethnically diverse student population (Astin & Astin, 2000; Nevarez et al., 2013; Roueche, Baker III, & Rose, 2014; Shields, 2010). For example, community college presidents must ensure the institution adapts to the students they serve rather than forcing the students to change to fit the institution (Eddy, 2010; Gonzalez, 2015).

Despite these efforts to meet the needs of a diverse student population, some scholars argue that community colleges have become more "enrollment-driven" institutions, and less focused on degree completion (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008; González, 2015; Núñez, 2015; Núñez, et al., 2011). Recently, policymakers have been incorporating degree completion rates as a performance metric through performance-based funding policies to pressure higher education institutions to increase degree completion rates (Gonzalez, 2015). This recent focus on the degree completion agenda may require community college presidents to implement institutional policies to address the external demands of improving degree completion rates, which may be at the expense of other pressing institutional goals (e.g. capital expansion).

While these aforementioned studies have suggested the importance of community college presidents and the degree completion agenda, few scholars have examined how they leverage their executive positional power to create innovative policies and practices to improve degree completion rates of Latino male students. Therefore, this study advances the extant

higher education research literature by exploring the perceptions of community college presidents at HSI about the awareness and commitment of their institution to improving degree completion rates of Latino male students.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Scholars have provided ample evidence on the importance of understanding organizational change in higher education (Kezar, 2001; 2013) and even how organizational change could improve students' of color academic success (Kezar & Eckel, 2007). Past research highlights, higher education organizational change can be best understood using particular change models. Kezar (2001) states "[t]he cumulative evidence, so far, suggests that organizational change can best be explained through political, social-cognition, and cultural models" (p. vii). These different models are often used to better understand organizational change "at a macro level—the level at which many institutional leaders view (or should view) their organizations" (Kezar, 2001, p. 25). In order to understand how community college presidents can affect organizational change, we used Kezar's social-cognition and cultural models to make meaning of the research study findings.

First, the social-cognition model states that organizational change occurs when leaders recognize the misalignment between the organizational functions and those they serve. In response, this allows leaders to alter and create a new organizational frame of mind (Kezar, 2001). The purpose of the social-cognition model is to examine "in greater detail how learning occurs and even tying the notion of change more directly to learning" (Kezar, 2001, p. 50). More specifically, people "reach a point of cognitive dissonance at which values and actions clash or something seems outmoded, and they decide to change" (Kezar, 2001, p.50). This may suggest with an increase of Latino student enrollment at community colleges, these institutional leaders are realizing they have to galvanize their institutions to align their functions and services to meet the needs of these students.

Next, similar to the social-cognition model, Kezar (2001) discussed that the cultural model tends "...to emphasize the collective process of change and the key role of each individual" (p. 52). This model focuses on "leaders' ability to shape organizational culture and on culture as collective or shared" (Kezar, 2001, p. 52). More importantly, the leaders play a critical role in organizational cultural change through "modifying the mission and vision, creating

new myths and rituals, leaders performing symbolic actions, using metaphors, assessing the institutional culture, tapping into energy, developing enthusiasm, altering motivations of people through spirituality, and communicating values and beliefs” (Kezar, 2001, p. 52). In this case, community college presidents at HSIs play a critical role in shaping their institutional culture to serve Latino students. Both organizational change models have key elements that complement one another to understand how community college presidents may play an essential role in improving degree completion rates of Latino male students.

## **Methods**

### **Data Source**

The data source for this study was part of a larger research project exploring the level of awareness of senior administrators, faculty, and professional staff about the educational experiences of Latino and African American male students across several Texas independent school districts, community colleges, and universities. For the purpose of this study, we used data collected from six community colleges located in different metropolitan areas across the state of Texas. These selected institutions operate in different governing structures where some are a part of a multi-campus community college system and some are standalone campuses. For example, two of these community colleges are standalone campuses with one president while the other four community colleges are part of a system governed by a president at each respective campus.

### **Data Sample**

We utilized a purposeful sampling approach in which we aimed to interview with different community college administrators. However, while collecting the interview data, we relied on opportunistic sampling to take advantage of the community college presidents who wanted to express their perceptions about this research topic (Creswell, 2012). The sample consisted of two female and four male presidents who all had a terminal degree. The presidents also had an average of 17 years of higher education leadership experience. These senior administrative leaders also discussed their extensive experience with implementing institutional policy and programmatic efforts to address other pressing and multifaceted institutional issues.

Qualitative research methodology scholars suggest that conducting interviews with select, influential, or prominent research participants provide unique insights that few organizational members could provide (Dexter, 1970; Maxwell, 2012; Seidman, 2013). While this study included only six individuals, these individuals provided important and insightful perspectives that only a senior postsecondary institutional leader can offer. Therefore, these presidents provide a unique perspective about leading its institution's degree completion agenda. Given the critical importance of the president to this institutional priority, we were able to interview six presidents to learn how they understood their institution's awareness and commitment to Latino male students' degree completion.

### **Research Design**

We utilized a qualitative research methodology for this study to explore how community college presidents understand the importance of improving degree completion outcomes for Latino male students at their respective institutions (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 1998). Each community college president was treated and analyzed as an individual case study (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2013). Then, we conducted a cross-case analysis across six institutions to better understand the insights of community college presidents and demonstrate how the findings do not reflect one institution but across all six institutions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, we utilized this approach to understand community college presidents' perceptions of how their institution understands and addresses the educational outcomes of Latino male students. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that conducting interviews as a data collection method allows investigators to understand how participants describe their social settings. That is, participants' insights shed valuable nuanced understandings about how they make meaning of their surroundings.

### **Interview Protocol, Data Collection, and Analysis**

We collected interview data for this study using in-person semi-structured interviews (e.g. approximately an hour) with each community college president. The interview protocol focused on four educational constructs: transitions to college, academic experiences, campus engagement, and degree completion. For the purpose of this study, we focused on the perceptions of the community college presidents about Latino male degree completion. Based

on the literature, this construct is a critical educational milestone for Latino male students because they encounter many challenges that may inhibit them from completing a college credential or degree (Bukoski & Hatch, 2016; Gonzalez, 2015; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

We transcribed the interview recordings verbatim, read, and coded each individual transcript. We utilized open coding for each individual transcript followed by axial coding to identify primary codes from the interview data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) by using Dedoose®, a web-based software. We met as a team to further discuss and crosscheck the initial codes and subsequent themes that emerged from across the six transcripts to gain a shared meaning of the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Finally, to confirm our findings, we applied methods of respondent validation and member-checking (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

### **Positionality of Researchers**

The researchers for this study are self-identified as Latina/o scholars who are interested in conducting research focused on Latino students in education. We conduct research on these issues to create awareness and advance the Latina/o research scholarship. Our focus represents our commitment to social justice issues that help improve the lives of the Latina/o community. We also acknowledge that our scholar identity may have influenced how the participants of this study responded to the questions and how we interpret the findings in this study.

### **Research Study Limitations**

We acknowledge there are limitations to our qualitative research study. We accept this research study is limited with only six community college presidents representing one state. The presidents in this study represent community colleges that have unique institutional characteristics that may provide an understanding of presidential leadership at community colleges. Finally, we understand that interview participants may provide desirable responses about the educational success of Latino male students. Despite these potential limitations, we argue that the findings reveal insightful themes that advance the research discourse on Latino male students in community colleges.

## Findings

Three primary themes emerged that described the perceptions of senior community college leaders about the educational experiences of Latino male students at their respective institutions: 1) Institutional challenges, 2) Importance of disaggregated student data, and 3) Leadership responsibilities to address institutional change.

### Institutional Challenges

Some community college presidents acknowledged they faced challenges when it came to raising awareness on their campus about the low degree completion rates of Latino male students. For instance, these leaders often experienced skepticism from other administrators, faculty members, and student affair practitioners about making an institutional commitment to addressing degree completion rates of Latino male students. One community college president stated,

You know it, sometimes it is painful as a leader of an institution, even though I was fairly new, because you will hear from some of the faculty and staff who are men of color, who are in the faculty and staff administration. You have this courageous conversation and the immediate thought it, oh yeah, well what are they going to do with it. Is anything going to change? We have heard this before.

These leaders also recognized that gaining institutional support required that they develop a focused message about Latino male students. One community college president stated,

Now it becomes ignorance is bliss. It's not—again, well-intended folks that just—if you don't bring the subject to their area, they don't realize it, and so we've created a lot of awareness on—and with y'all's assistance and your teams of really creating an awareness that Latino males are an issue; that we don't have enough of them on campus. Until we brought that to their attention, they had no idea.

They also recognized that the developmental education curriculum might be a structural institutional barrier for Latino male students. For example, one community college president discussed how Latino male students might become discouraged while taking developmental math courses:

You get stuck in a cycle where you're taking three, four different levels of developmental math before you start and are eligible to take a college ready class, or a college level class, and even though you are taking the developmental classes, in college it's just hard. We need to make sure that they see it as a milestone to be successful, and not necessarily a roadblock.

These community college presidents recognized that there are potential institutional barriers (e.g. skepticism, developmental education curriculum) that may influence the degree completion rates of Latino male students. The participants are aware they must work towards reducing skepticism about addressing challenges that Latino male students face, framing a focused message to address this issue, and addressing the potential institutional barriers that may inhibit the academic success of Latino male students.

### **Importance of Disaggregated Student Data**

A primary theme that emerged was that the community college presidents were the driving force in bringing attention to the degree completion disparity of Latino male students at their institutions. For example, one community college president expressed being intentional by using the institutional data to examine disparities in degree completion rates:

I would say the first couple years it was what data we need to look at and how to get it. What we did make a commitment to in that is a priority of eliminating the disparity. So that is a core commitment in our Achieving the Dream in our data collection and all of the efforts we do. We are in the process now of establishing targets.

Another community college president shared the same sentiment of the importance of using disaggregated institutional data to target specific student groups, "How much are we [institution] going to improve across all ethnicities, gender, and so forth." Finally, some community college presidents used this type of student data to understand student enrollment patterns. For example, a community college president learned an interesting enrollment pattern, "We did that deliberately [disaggregating the data] that the data shows that those students who enrolled last were the first to fail and the first to drop out."

Some community college presidents explained the significance of utilizing institutional data to gain support from the institution to advance their leadership efforts and organizational

changes. For instance, one community college president suggested that institutional change occurs when they leverage student data. This president described this process as,

Data democracy, which means you gotta get the information, but you gotta share the information. If data democracy allows everyone to have access to information and activism at every level, it's only true and credible to the people who are closest to the learning, closest to the students, actually see the data and use the data.

Another community college president also supported the inherent value of student data:

It's good to understand what the data show, because then you can't say, hey. This is all anecdotal. To look at the data and to wonder what does this mean, and not to let the data drive us but to inform us. What are we doing well? What can we do more of?

The narratives from these leaders suggested that they valued institutional data to understand the degree completion rates of different student groups. That is, they recognized that disaggregated data is the first step of organizational change to address degree completion rates of Latino male students. Moreover, they recognized the importance of detailed student data to inform institutional decisions about planning and policies.

### **Leadership Responsibilities to Address Institutional Change**

Although these presidents understood organizational change would occur gradually, they also recognized the importance of their leadership responsibilities. For example, one community college president expressed their commitment to this issue by stating, "One thing I realized, you can't change anything overnight. If it is worth doing, it's going to take some time. You just have to make a commitment to try and make a difference." Another president conveyed the importance of their leadership to address organizational change:

I think you have to talk that in front of the faculty and the staff. You have to let them know that this is what we need to be and to highlight those areas that are doing it really well and give them outward praise so that we see when we're a college like this we serve the student better, we have better outcomes. I think that is the job of the president.

They also discussed their responsibility to improve the hiring of more racially and ethnically diverse faculty members to reflect the student population at their institution. For instance, one community college president stated,

You know, then you look at, if you want to help men of color, people of color, then who is in the classroom, who are the administrators, who are the counselors, who are the advisors? Do they look like us? So you have to make sure that, that is ever present in the front of your mind as you are filling positions at all levels.

Some presidents provided insights on leadership strategies for organizational change. For example, one community college president discussed their leadership role to create a new organizational culture:

To continue to model my positive behavior, but also be more intentional in what we can do to help our students and employees. The easier it is to help our employees be successful, the easier it is for them to do their job, and so to make sure that we not only hire the people that enhance the culture here, but also provide professional development for the people that are here, support that, and also for the people who are coming in.

Finally, another president discussed their leadership role as a way to address how institutional policies may discriminate or hurt specific student groups:

We held a conversation with all the leadership team... and we brought them together for a series of workshops and conversations on eliminating institutional racism. And we really got into some of the way we perceive we are doing the right thing and the end result is we hurt somebody because we created a policy, procedure, or process, that we thought was the right thing and you look at it downstream and it caused harm to people, so that conversation stirred up a lot of emotion.

These community college presidents recognized the importance of their leadership role to achieve organizational change to improve degree completion rates of Latino male students. They also acknowledged that they need to advocate for organizational change, encourage the hiring of diverse faculty and professional staff, provide professional development for faculty and

professional staff, and address institutional racism to improve the educational experiences of Latino male students.

### Discussion

This article aimed to explore how Texas community college presidents perceived the awareness and commitment of their institution to improve degree completion rates of Latino male students. The findings provided unique insights from these leaders that highlighted the challenges of working with their institution to achieve this goal. The themes revealed a complex portrait of how these leaders create greater institutional awareness to address this challenging educational issue. These themes also highlighted that the presidents accepted that their institutions must take on the responsibility of helping Latino male students succeed.

First, these community college presidents recognized that some institutional members expressed skepticism that their institution should make a commitment to helping Latino male students. The presidents commented that they have experienced some institutional resistance about the need to focus specifically on the educational outcomes of Latino males. For example, there is a growing concern among scholars that institutional agents are often unaware of the significance and purpose of HSIs (Núñez, 2015; Perrakis & Hagedorn, 2010). Some scholars suggest we must look beyond this institutional designation and shift our attention towards how these institutions advance their efforts to improve educational outcomes for Hispanic students (Contreras et al., 2008; Núñez, 2015; Núñez et al., 2011).

Relying on the theoretical lens of the cultural model to explain organizational change, institutional leaders play a critical role in reframing how community colleges must change its organizational culture to meet the educational needs of Latino male students. In this study, the community college presidents demonstrated that they must be unapologetic about making the institution committed to Latino male students. Unfortunately, some institutions lack a commitment to address the disparities in educational outcomes. Scholars have stated, “It is often the burden of the student to make the most of his/her collegiate experience with little commitment from the institution” (Ingram & Gonzalez-Matthews, 2013, p. 647). Community college presidents demonstrate their unwavering commitment to Latino male students by critically examining institutional policies. Some presidents recognized that they must improve the delivery of the developmental education curriculum. For example, community college

faculty members who teach in developmental education courses could develop better cultural competency skills via professional development workshops to help their relationships with Latino male students. Scholars have noted community colleges that provide positive experiences to Latino male students ensures their educational success (Ingram & Gonzalez-Matthews, 2013).

Next, these leaders discussed the importance of using disaggregated institutional student data to highlight differences in educational outcomes by gender and race. Scholars have found that Latino male students compared to their other racial and ethnic male peers are not completing community college degrees at similar rates (Baber & Graham, 2015) and they have different completion rates between Hispanic sub-ethnic groups (e.g. Mexican vs. Cuban) (Ponjuan, Palomin, & Calise, 2015). Perhaps these leaders could use this detailed institutional student data as empirical evidence to highlight Latino males who do not earn a community college certificate or degree. Therefore, collaboration between presidents and their institutional research office is a critical element to make informed institutional decisions (Calderon & Mathies, 2013; Swing & Ross, 2016).

These community college presidents recognized that institutional student data provides empirical evidence to raise awareness and to focus their institution's attention on students who are not succeeding academically. These findings also underscore the importance for these leaders to leverage this data to make organizational changes. That is, applying the theoretical lens of the social-cognition model to understand organizational change, these leaders could use the disaggregated institutional data to create cognitive dissonance among institutional members to force them to reconcile the misalignment between the institution's mission and the gender disparities in degree completion rates. Scholars have found that HSIs mission statements were often misaligned with its purpose (Contreras et al., 2008). In addition, the institutional data may create cognitive dissonance for some community members, which may result in a new organizational frame of mind, which is necessary as a precursor to organizational change.

These leaders recognized their important role of leading their institution to focus specifically on improving degree completion rates for Latino male students. Scholars have noted that community college presidents must dedicate appropriate institutional resources and engage faculty and staff, in order to have institutional change (Mayer, Cerna, Cullinan, Fong, Rutschow, & Jenkins, 2014; Rutschow et al., 2011). Our study found that community college

presidents still face similar issues with not having enough representation of faculty members of color and professional staff in their institutions. Over a decade ago, a study found that HSIs presidents faced challenges of having a diverse faculty (Alfredo & Gerardo, 2003). However, scholars highlight that Latina/o faculty members still remain underrepresented in higher education (Brown, McHatton, & Scott, 2017; Turner, González, & Wood, 2008; Urrieta & Chavez, 2010). These community college presidents recognized the need to have more racially and ethnically diverse faculty members to help improve the academic experiences of Latino male students at their institutions. Increasing the representation of Latina/o personnel at these institutions may help to improve degree completion rates of Latino male students and the overall institutional climate (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Ponjuan, 2011; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011).

Applying the theoretical lens of the cultural model to understand organizational change, these leaders believed that hiring faculty of color would be a catalyst for institutional change. As a result, new Latino faculty members would compel the institution to focus on improving the academic success of Latino male students. These institutional changes are not easy or happen quickly, but these presidents recognized that they must be patient and develop a sustained institutional commitment on this issue.

In conclusion, community college presidents are important to guiding community college organizational change in order to improve degree completion outcomes of students of color (Kezar & Eckel, 2007). This study advances the research literature by exploring how community college presidents describe their institution's awareness and commitment to improving degree completion outcomes of Latino male students. We argue that these leaders must continue being courageous and unapologetic in helping these students academically succeed.

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