



Education Partnerships

USA Funds® is a nonprofit corporation that works to enhance postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success by providing and supporting financial and other valued services.

USA Funds-sponsored report shows Latino students lag in financial aid

An upcoming report commissioned by USA Funds shows that Latino students receive less financial aid for college than any other racial or ethnic group, despite the critical role that this aid plays in Latino students' ability to pay for higher education.



Jamie Merisotis

"How Latino Students Pay for College" aims to provide previously difficult-to-find information about the types and amounts of financial aid that Latinos receive, and deliver it in an easily accessible format.

Excelencia in Education and the Institute for Higher Education Policy are preparing the report, scheduled for release in

English and Spanish later this month.

"Financial aid is important for all students, but particularly for Latino students," says Sarita Brown, *Excelencia* in Education president. "Many Latino students come from modest financial backgrounds, and many are first-generation college students."

By summarizing the status of aid to Latinos, the research endeavors to inform national policy debates, such as current deliberations regarding the reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act. The report also strives to assist policy-makers in formulating state policies and initiatives regarding Latino students, in budget decision making, and in discussions about higher-education access and success for Latino students.

"How Latino Students Pay for College" offers recommendations for action to combat the discrepancy between the importance of aid for Latino

students and the amount of assistance received.

Henry Fernandez, USA Funds executive director of scholarships, outreach and philanthropy, notes that USA Funds' financial support of the research is consistent with USA Funds' nonprofit mission in support of higher-education preparation, access and success.

"USA Funds is committed to enhancing college access for all deserving students," Fernandez says. "The results of this study will lay the groundwork for improving access for this rapidly growing population."

The following findings are among those detailed in "How Latino Students Pay for College":

- Federal financial aid is critical for Latino students. In 2003-2004 half of Latino undergraduates received federal aid. In contrast, less than one-fourth of Latino undergraduates received either state aid or aid from postsecondary institutions.
- Although Latino students were more likely than the combination of all other racial and ethnic groups to receive federal aid in 2003-2004, Latinos received the lowest average federal-aid awards of any racial or ethnic group.
- Latino students who attended postsecondary institutions full time were more likely to receive aid and received higher average amounts of aid than Latino students who attended less than full time.
- Latinos with higher family incomes received higher average financial-aid awards than lower-income Latino students.

Researchers based their findings on analysis of the most up-to-date information available about the participation of Latino students in financial-aid programs,

continued on page 3



Sarita Brown

"Financial aid is important for all students, but particularly for Latino students," says Sarita Brown of *Excelencia* in Education.

Grants Awarded by USA Funds April 1, 2005 – June 30, 2005

American Indian Higher Education Consortium

Alexandria, Va.

Project "The Path of Many Journeys: The Benefits of Higher Education for Native People and Communities"

Geographic Scope National
Amount \$100,000

This joint research effort partners the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Institute for Higher Education Policy and the American Indian College Fund. The team is examining the barriers facing Native Americans in pursuit of higher education, and successful strategies for removing these barriers.

Brevard College Corp.

Brevard, N.C.

Project Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 21st Annual Recruitment and Retention Conference

Geographic Scope Texas
Amount \$77,338

USA Funds sponsored sessions about student retention and success, with a focus on first-year and Latino students. More than 400 college faculty and administrators attended the sessions during the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board conference.

Riley Children's Foundation

Indianapolis

Project Riley Hospital for Children Education Program

Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$50,500

The school program at Riley Hospital for Children helps children, adolescents and teens with chronic or life-changing illnesses to be successful in school and prepares them for higher education or job training.

California Dollars for Scholars

Tustin, Calif.

Project Challenge Grant 2005
Geographic Scope California
Amount \$50,000

USA Funds supports the California regional Dollars for Scholars chapters in their effort to expand programming. A program of Scholarship America, Dollars for Scholars promotes community-based fund raising for scholarships awarded to local students.

College Summit

Washington, D.C.

Project College Summit Arizona

Geographic Scope Arizona
Amount \$50,000

The national College Summit program aims to dramatically increase the college-enrollment rate of low-income students. In total, USA Funds contributed \$100,000 to start the program in Arizona this year.

Indiana Black Expo

Indianapolis

Project Youth Summit and Educational Initiatives

Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$50,000

The Indiana Black Expo Youth Summit encourages youth to affect society in a meaningful and positive way. USA Funds' grant supports youth-development activities and local educational initiatives.

Think Ahead Inc.

Dresden, Maine

Project Maryland College Aid Calculator 2005-2006

Geographic Scope Maryland
Amount \$18,000

Entering its third year of support, USA Funds sponsors the Maryland College Aid Calculator in conjunction with the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The calculator permits visitors to the MHEC Web site — www.mhec.state.md.us — to determine their Expected Family Contribution and eligibility for need-based financial aid.

Kansas Academic Decathlon Association

Manhattan, Kan.

Project Kansas Academic Decathlon

Geographic Scope Kansas
Amount \$15,000

The Kansas Academic Decathlon academic competition encourages academic excellence and offers students an early introduction to higher education.

National Association of Latino Elected Officials Educational Fund

Los Angeles

Project NALEO Annual Conference

Geographic Scope National
Amount \$15,000

The NALEO Conference is the largest gathering of Latino elected and appointed officials in the nation. USA Funds sponsored a conference session about Hispanic-student access to postsecondary education.

Indiana Humanities Council

Indianapolis

Project Indiana Leadership Summit

Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$10,000

The Indiana Humanities Council hosts an annual summit featuring national subject experts discussing critical issues with Indiana leaders in the business, government, education and nonprofit sectors. USA Funds sponsored a session focusing on the importance of college attainment.

Parents & Kids

Jackson, Miss.

Project 2005 Regional College Fairs

Geographic Scope Mississippi
Amount \$10,000

Parents & Kids, a Mississippi-based educational magazine, will host a series of five regional college fairs.

Indiana Campus Compact

Indianapolis

Project "Engagement & Service, a Focus on Assessment" Conference

Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$7,500

Indiana Campus Compact, a consortium of colleges committed to enhancing students' community-service opportunities and experiences, is organizing a statewide conference. The event will focus on better incorporating civic engagement and service learning at postsecondary institutions.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Indiana

Indianapolis

Project 2005 Horsin' Around for Kids Auction
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$5,000

The 30th Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Indiana Horsin' Around for Kids Auction raised funds for the organization, which develops mentors committed to helping boys and girls grow into caring, confident and competent adults.

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

Jackson, Miss.

Project *Mississippi NEXT: A Guide to Life After High School*

Geographic Scope Mississippi
Amount \$5,000

Mississippi NEXT magazine provides the state's 10th-12th-graders with a comprehensive guide to education and career opportunities available after high school.

Riverview Hospital Memorial Foundation

Noblesville, Ind.

Projects Women of Vision Luncheon and Nancy's Retreat

Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$5,000

The Women of Vision Luncheon and Nancy's Retreat aim to increase awareness of women's health issues in Central Indiana.

National College Access Network

Cleveland

Project NCAN 10th-Anniversary Conference

Geographic Scope National
Amount \$3,000

This conference will attract more than 350 college-access leaders, including program practitioners; researchers; leaders; and representatives of higher education, lenders and communities. The event provides information about starting college-access initiatives.

Play Ball Indiana

Indianapolis

Project Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities Night at Victory Field

Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$2,500

Indiana's RBI Night at Victory Field raised funds to support the "Breaking Barriers: In Sports, In Life" literacy and character-education program for youth.

State Higher Education Executive Officers

Denver

Project SHEEO Annual Meeting

Geographic Scope National
Amount \$2,500

SHEEO assists state higher-education executives in developing and sustaining excellent systems of higher education. This year's meeting is the 52nd-annual event.

Indianapolis Urban League

Indianapolis

Project 2005 Indianapolis Urban League Equal Opportunity Day

Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$2,000

Equal Opportunity Day recognizes the important role of commerce and industry in college-access, employment, job-retention and diversity issues.

Indiana Dollars for Scholars

Carmel, Ind.

Project 2005 Hoosier Heroes

Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$1,500

Hoosier Heroes develops students' appreciation for outstanding citizens who have overcome life obstacles or have accomplished significant goals. Serving as the lead corporate sponsor for this event, USA Funds sponsored a corporate table and contributed a total of more than \$10,000.

Brevard Community College

Melbourne, Fla.

Project 2005 Postsecondary Disability Services Conference, "Synergy for Excellence: Defining Standard Operating Procedures and Infrastructure for Students With Disabilities"

Geographic Scope Florida
Amount \$1,000

USA Funds joined the Florida Foundation for Community Colleges, the Florida Board of Governors Foundation and other private supporters to sponsor this event. The conference trained more than 200 professional staff members to better serve students with disabilities at postsecondary institutions in Florida.

Crossroads of America Council, Boy Scouts of America

Indianapolis

Project The Boy Scouts & Marsh Present Cookout on the Circle

Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$1,000

Proceeds from the 14th-annual Cookout on the Circle will fund scholarships for at-risk youth to attend summer camps.

Reading Is Fundamental Inc.

McLean, Va.

Project Reading Is Fundamental 2005 Fall Benefit

Geographic Scope National
Amount \$1,000

The fall benefit for Reading Is Fundamental will support the organization's literacy services. Since 1966 Reading Is Fundamental has provided literacy services to almost 5 million children at 23,000 sites nationwide, and has provided more than 250 million free books.

USA Funds supports neighborhood-revitalization efforts

Charlotte Wadlington's husband had to pull her back to reality on the evening of April 30, 2005. The home repairs and yard work performed that day by volunteers from USA Funds through Rebuilding Together Indianapolis turned out so well that she couldn't stop admiring the results.

"I was so hyped," she says now, laughing, "that my husband had to calm me down to fix dinner."

Eighteen USA Funds employees and family members spent that Saturday painting, landscaping and cleaning at Wadlington's Indianapolis home. Their efforts were part of USA Funds' support of Rebuilding Together Indianapolis, which conducts its Christmas in April event each year.

Rebuilding Together Indianapolis is an affiliate of Rebuilding Together USA. The nonprofit organization provides assistance to people who own their own homes but who, because of physical or income limitations, struggle with home repairs. At this year's Christmas in April in Indianapolis, 600 volunteers rehabilitated 20 homes in a neighborhood on the city's southeast side.

USA Funds has sponsored Rebuilding Together Indianapolis' efforts since 2002, this year providing \$3,000 in addition to volunteers in support of Christmas in April. Headquartered in Indianapolis, USA Funds supports Rebuilding Together Indianapolis as part of a commitment to assisting individuals and charitable organizations in the areas where USA Funds' offices are located.



Photo by Shaun Spence

USA Funds employees and their families provide volunteer assistance through Rebuilding Together Indianapolis' Christmas in April.

Latino students lag in financial aid *continued from page 1*

from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study data for the 2003-2004 award year. "How Latino Students Pay for College" is the first study to present this data as it specifically relates to Latino students. The research considers grants and loans provided by federal, state and institutional sources.

IHEP President Jamie Merisotis notes that the researchers' findings have implications that reach beyond the Latino population. The report's recommendations for action include items that would specifically target Latino students, such as developing outreach programs to

"USA Funds encourages employee participation in the community by finding ways we can help," says John Morrical, a USA Funds auditor who was one of the company's volunteer coordinators for Christmas in April.

Morrical has volunteered for Christmas in April for three years.

"With Rebuilding Together, the joy is not in seeing the job done," he says, "but in seeing the homeowners when they see the job being completed — seeing that happiness."

USA Funds' continued support of Rebuilding Together Indianapolis has been vital, says Vicki Perkins, president of the organization's board of directors. "There are not enough groups working on keeping folks in their homes," she says, "and without USA Funds' sponsorship, that's one less house we can support in the community. Without sponsors, we simply couldn't do what we do."

In addition to the work on the day of Christmas in April, Rebuilding Together assigns construction contractors to the homes, to tackle projects that need an expert's skills. The contractor assigned to the Wadlington home installed new cabinets, countertops, carpeting and a sink in the kitchen.

Rebuilding Together Indianapolis selects a different neighborhood for Christmas in April revitalization efforts each year. For Wadlington and her husband, James, who have lived in their neighborhood almost 35 years, being selected for assistance meant their home got repairs that they no longer could do themselves.

"We're retired, on a fixed income and in poor health," Charlotte Wadlington says. "We appreciate what was done. They did an excellent job." ■



Photo by Shaun Spence

USA Funds volunteers help refurbish the kitchen of a home on Indianapolis' southeast side.

educate Latinos about financial aid. Additionally, however, "How Latino Students Pay for College" recommends initiatives that could apply to disadvantaged students of any racial or ethnic group, such as increasing the maximum amount for Federal Pell grants for college.

"The findings about Latino students provide a window to a broader challenge that many disadvantaged students face in the financial-aid system: There are not enough resources, but their financial needs are very high," Merisotis says. "This needs to be taken into account as we formulate financial-aid strategies." ■

"How Latino Students Pay for College" will be available later this month for downloading from the Web sites of the organizations involved in the project:

- USA Funds — www.usafunds.org.
- Excelencia in Education — www.excelencia.org.
- Institute for Higher Education Policy — www.ihep.org.

Five steps to greater student retention

By John Gardner, Executive Director, Policy Center on the First Year of College



As postsecondary schools across the nation prepare to greet a new class of incoming first-year students, a primary concern is how to bolster the number of these students who persist from the first to second year of college and ultimately graduate.

Improving retention involves a number of steps, but the following five top my list of key activities for retaining new students:

1 Require all students to participate in a first-year seminar.

Students who participate in first-year seminars are more likely to persist and graduate than are their peers who do not take these courses. First-year seminars teach students how to be successful in college and offer a small class where they can make friends and interact with a supportive instructor.

2 Link two or more courses to create a learning community.

This activity provides an early college experience that connects students, faculty and staff of all disciplines. The learning community is second only to the first-year seminar in usage at American postsecondary schools. The activity is a highly researched curricular structure with a predictably positive impact on student-retention rates, academic performance and levels of student satisfaction, as well as satisfaction for instructors. Most important, these outcomes are consistent regardless of the type of campus or student.

3 Stop expecting and tolerating failure in mathematics.

We have become so tolerant of failure in math that we believe it is a natural feature of our universe. Reducing our tolerance of high levels of failure means accepting more responsibility for student performance. This change, in turn, requires us to examine our own campuses' practices and attitudes regarding issues ranging from class size to assessment.

4 Move retention efforts to classes most likely to be taken by first-year students.

Focus especially on courses that are prerequisites for students' progressing into their majors. The most-common strategy of campus policy-makers is to attack the retention problem by emphasizing the work of nonfaculty outside of class. Although services such as orientation, campus activities, advising and learning support are necessary, focusing solely on these areas is not sufficient. I believe the emphasis on extracurricular activities in student retention has distracted us from focusing on the heart of the action, which is what goes on in the first-year classroom.

5 Conduct a comprehensive study of the first year that recognizes the interrelatedness of all its components.

Such a study should involve self-examination by a specially appointed task force. This group should take the conversation beyond a strict focus on "retention" to a broader consideration of how the institution should design a range of high-quality experiences for new students. The ultimate purpose of this self-study is to produce an improvement/action plan that both confirms institutional strengths and identifies areas ripe for change.

Ultimately, however, what matters most are not *my* top five, but *your* top five. Identify them through a collegial process, and pursue them with a vengeance. There are many best practices for improving student persistence. I wish you the best in your pursuit of those that will work in your campus setting. ■

Student-retention resources on the Web

USA Funds "Solving the Retention Puzzle"

www.usafunds.org/financial_aid/debt_management/solving_retention_puzzle/index.html

Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year

www.fyfoundations.org

Policy Center on the First Year of College

www.brevard.edu/fyc

National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina

www.sc.edu/fye

Noel-Levitz

www.noellevitz.com