

Immigration and Higher Education

Recommendations for Consideration – January 29

1. Increase and improve opportunities for immigrant students to receive advising and mentorship outside of school.

Even if we successfully double the number of guidance counselors in Minnesota schools, the average student-to-counselor ratio will be approximately 400-to-1 – far too many students per counselor to allow for the kind of “intrusive” advising that many students need.

In addition to greater access to counselors at their schools, immigrant students will benefit from the assistance of well-informed adults who can help them navigate the college process. To ensure that immigrant students get the out-of-school advising they need, we recommend:

- **Encourage immigrant college students to serve immigrant high school students in accessing college education via college work-study and AmeriCorps programming.**

Current immigrant college students have the ability to be role models, and inherently have cultural competencies and community connections to encourage immigrant high school students to pursue college. Teaching mentorship as a valuable construct of serving one’s community assists development in both tangible and intangible ways. Providing ways for students to create assistance for others is a community-building activity and part of civic engagement we believe is good and wish to foster. It also provides a sophisticated opportunity to create additional funding for the mentoring students. America Reads is one example of a student-to-student model in action.

- **Create a network of mentor “advocates” to provide information and training to those who professionally or as a volunteer assist immigrant students in navigating the college process.**

A network for these mentor advocates will increase the mentors’ knowledge and ability to support and advise students.

- **Encourage increased private and public resources to programs which assist immigrant students accessing higher education.**

Focus increased investment in immigrant-led programs and programs that are already successful.

- 2. Encourage higher educational institutions to approach non-traditional/older students as a target population for both financial resources and academic support.**

Note: This was one of Jennifer Godinez's "top three" recommendations.

Immigrant students are often older students. Our anecdotal reality suggests there is less scholarships and aid available to students that don't track immediately to college post high school. We want to challenge the idea- - even if it's only a perception and not reality that would change - of college access and support (private programs included) to be more inclusive of older students and transfers between 2-yr and 4-yr programs (i.e. closer to profile of average immigrant students pursuing higher education).

- 3. A formal study of how immigrant students in college received their information. What programs, high schools, colleges and other methods are successful?**

Note: This was one of Jennifer Godinez's "top three" recommendations.

There are clearly some immigrant students that have been able to attend and be successful in college. It would be worthwhile to study how these students received information.

- 4. As a part of the Minnesota state grant, provide students enrolled in an institution of higher education \$500 per semester in cash.**

[Note: Check whether something like this already exists in Minnesota.]

Many of the people who offered input on our recommendations were concerned about the feasibility of this recommendation – both the potential to require new money, and the political feasibility of giving cash (rather than vouchers, or payments that go directly to a college or university) to students. They also raised concerns about waste/fraud (e.g., students would use the money to buy things unrelated to their education).

This money is intended to be spent on textbooks. Students should be allowed to manage the cash so that they can purchase texts from the least expensive source, which may or may not be the college bookstore. To finance this, a larger proportion of the state's higher education funding should go to the state grant program.