

¡ENLACE FLORIDA!

Executive Summary

The mission of ENLACE FLORIDA is to build a statewide network to improve college readiness, access, and success in higher education for Latino students and other under-represented groups. With funding from the Kellogg Foundation, ENLACE FLORIDA will promote policy change and sustainability in support of Florida's strategic educational objectives. The network, composed of universities, community colleges, school districts, community organizations, students, and families, will work with and inform the deliberations of state legislators, the Florida Board of Education, the Florida Board of Governors, University Boards of Trustees, and school districts to develop and advocate for policies that will ensure that all Latino high school graduates are prepared to enter and succeed in higher education.

USF, UCF, FAU, and FIU will take the lead in forming regional clusters of educational partners. These four universities accounted for 75 percent of Hispanic enrollment in the entire SUS system in 2005. Miami Dade, Broward, Valencia, Hillsborough, and Palm Beach enrolled 80 percent of all Hispanic students in the state community college system in 2004. The school districts in south and central Florida contributed 90 percent of total Latino membership in Florida's K-12 system. By pooling the resources of these universities, community colleges, school districts, and various community organizations, the ENLACE FLORIDA network will develop the institutional capability required to support ongoing state efforts to transform best practices into policies to improve college readiness, access, and success.

Latinos are the largest and fastest growing minority group in Florida. In the twenty-five year period from 1977 to 2003, Hispanic public K-12 enrollment in Florida increased over 462%. Florida's Hispanic population is projected to increase from 2.6 million in 2000 to 6.3 million in 2030, when Latinos will account for 25 percent of the state's population.

ENLACE FLORIDA's objectives are consistent with and supportive of the state of Florida's educational priorities, including the creation of a seamless K-20 educational system. The State University System of Florida's Strategic Plan (2005) calls on all universities and colleges to increase graduation rates so that the percentage of minority graduates in the year 2013 will reflect the percentage of minority students in the total state population. Moreover, Governor Jeb Bush announced an Access and Diversity initiative in January 2006 and proposed additional state funding to open the doors of Florida's higher education facilities to students who are unable to pursue a college education due to financial barriers.

ENLACE FLORIDA will draw on the best practices demonstrated in ENLACE Phase II programs in Hillsborough and Miami-Dade counties to advocate for policy change, institutional re-engineering, and sustainability. Given the state's increasing attention to the demographic challenges presented by an increasing minority population, the time is propitious to expand the ENLACE network to create ENLACE FLORIDA and to generate policies designed to ensure sustainability and promote systemic change. Through a coordinated, state-wide effort to promote college readiness, access, and success for Latino students, the ENLACE network will also serve as a model of collaboration for other minorities and low-income, first-generation students.