Understanding Hispanic Student Academic Undermatch & College Completion

By the Fall 2019 Capstone Team Good Citizens
Sarah Fitch, Deon Glaser, Vanessa Lopez, Maya Pendleton, John Perrino

Produced for the National College Access Network in fulfillment of the George Washington University Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration capstone requirements.
Table of Contents

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... 4
Key Findings......................................................................................................................... 4
Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................. 5
Background .......................................................................................................................... 6
Project Rationale .................................................................................................................. 8
Literature Review .................................................................................................................. 9
  Defining Academic Undermatch ....................................................................................... 9
    Issues with Academic Undermatch ................................................................................. 9
    Value in Examining Academic Undermatch .................................................................. 10
  Academic Undermatch in Hispanic Communities ............................................................ 10
  Strategies to Address Academic Undermatch and Degree Completion ............................ 11
Data & Methodology ............................................................................................................ 12
  Research Question 1: Studies & Descriptive Statistics .................................................. 13
  Research Question 2: NCAN Survey & Interviews ......................................................... 14
    Survey Design .................................................................................................................. 14
    Survey Format .................................................................................................................. 14
    Semi-Structured Interviews ......................................................................................... 14
    Semi-Structured Interviews and Coding ...................................................................... 15
  Research Question 3: Case Study .................................................................................... 15
Findings & Analysis ............................................................................................................. 15
  1. How do NCAN member-served Hispanic student enrollment and college completion rates compare to those nationwide? ........................................................... 15
  2. Is there a factor or set of factors unique to the Hispanic population that contributes to academic undermatching and college degree completion? .................................. 20
    Finances & Affordability ............................................................................................... 21
    Family Obligation ......................................................................................................... 21
    Exposure to Postsecondary Opportunities .................................................................. 22
  3. Which strategies can NCAN members employ to increase college completion rates for academically undermatched Hispanic students? ............................................... 25
    Case Study: The College Crusade of Rhode Island ..................................................... 25
Conclusions and Recommendations .................................................................................. 27
  Academic Undermatch or College Fit? ............................................................................ 27
  Disproportionate Numbers Among Data Samples ............................................................ 28
Recommendations .............................................................................................................. 28
  Engage & Educate Families Early ................................................................................... 29
Executive Summary
This study aims to better understand the drivers behind college choice and completion rates among Hispanic students. The report was prepared for the nonprofit National College Access Network (NCAN) to help equip their member organizations with information and tools to address academic undermatch and improve postsecondary degree completion rates for Hispanic member-served students. Obtaining a college degree is crucial for economic mobility, especially for underrepresented communities with less access to economic stability. The report finds that academic undermatch is one metric to understand college access, but that a more comprehensive, student-centered approach, is needed to support student access and degree completion. The report recommends that NCAN members emphasize college fit, which includes the social, cultural, economic, as well as academic needs of students in developing programs for Hispanic member-served students.

Key Findings

How do NCAN member-served Hispanic student enrollment and college completion rates compare to those nationwide?

- 47% of NCAN member-served first-time enrollees are Hispanic, compared to 14% in the nationally representative sample. This highlights the importance of identifying proven strategies to improve Hispanic student outcomes within NCAN member-served student communities given their representational majority.
- 72% of NCAN member-served students enrolled in two- and four-year institutions are considered first-generation, compared to 48% in the nationally representative sample.
- NCAN member-served students enroll in four-year public institutions at a rate ten percentage points higher than the national average and in two-year public institutions at a rate eight percentage points lower than the nationally representative sample.

Is there a factor or set of factors unique to the Hispanic population that contributes to academic undermatching and college completion rates?

- Students and their families are less familiar with higher education, have less direct access to resources, and need culturally relevant education about the college application process.
- A close-knit family structure, familial obligations, and a desire to attend school close to support systems were major factors in school choice.
- Financial barriers are more pronounced among this Hispanic student population for college access.

Which strategies can NCAN members employ to increase college completion rates for academically undermatched Hispanic students?

- Engage & educate families early
- Meet students where they
- Consider two-year institutions as a bridge to four-year
- Offer less restrictive forms of financial support
- Increase college support services
- Use student feedback to inform program development
Acknowledgements
The research team would like to extend our appreciation to Bill DeBaun and Janai Raphael of NCAN for their invaluable expertise and for connecting us with their member organizations and member-served students. We are also grateful to advisor Michael Rodriguez and Professor Nancy Augustine for their guidance and support throughout this project.
Background

Throughout the U.S., the value of a college degree continues to grow. Research has shown that a college degree is associated with increased economic mobility, higher employment rates, greater lifetime income, better health, and increased ability to pass down wealth and valuable connections to younger generations (Reardon, Baker, & Klasik, 2012). The strong relationship between parents’ income levels and that of their adult children is also tied to educational attainment (Winfree, Butler, & Beach, 2008). Over the past two decades, wage growth for those with college degrees has risen twice as fast as those with high school diplomas, and the difference in wages for college-educated and high school-educated workers is now more than 48% (Gould, 2019). Additionally, studies increasingly find that a student’s college completion status and long-term economic stability is largely dependent on where that student chooses to pursue their postsecondary education, not just whether they pursue it (Baker, Klasik, & Reardon, 2018).

For low-income, first-generation, and non-White students, a college education helps level the playing field and provides access to the economic mobility ladder. Upon graduation, these students demonstrate similar labor market outcomes to their peers (Chetty et al., 2017). College completion is especially important in the U.S. for Hispanic workers who, compared with White workers, have a 12% wage gap that has persisted over the past 18 years. Wage growth has also been strongest among Hispanic workers at the top of the wage distribution. This signals that wage inequality is increasing within racial/ethnic groups, and college completion is seen as a primary solution to closing the gap (Gould, 2019).

Despite the clear relationship between college degree attainment and social/economic mobility, college completion rates remain low. The U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that only 60% of first-time students attending a four-year institution completed their bachelor’s degree within six years, and 32% of first-time students at two-year institutions received a credential within three years. Those numbers decrease for non-White students, with 55% of Hispanic students completing their degree within six years at four-year institutions and 30% within three years at two-year institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).
Figure 1: Graduation Rates for First Postsecondary Institution Attended, 2010 Cohort

Graduation rates from first institution attended for first-time, full-time bachelor’s degree-seeking students at four-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and time to completion: Cohort entry year 2010 (Source: U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)

A seminal 2000 study found that students of all academic ability levels have a higher chance of degree completion if the selectivity level of the college they attend matches their academic skill level (Light & Strayer, 2000). In other words, it appears academically undermatched students have a lower likelihood of college completion than their peers. The relationship between completed education level and wages, employment rates, health, and job satisfaction has led researchers to focus on academic undermatch as a contributor of low college completion rates across the U.S. (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). Studies have shown that students that match to more highly selective postsecondary institutions are more likely to graduate and have greater success in the labor market (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). However, what remains unclear is the role that social and personal factors play into a student’s school choice.

The educational theory of academic undermatch is a source of heated debate among researchers. Academic undermatch occurs “when a student’s academic credentials permit them access to a college or university that is more selective than the postsecondary alternative they actually choose” (Smith, Pender, Howell, & Hurwitz, 2012). Undermatch is determined using a regression to calculate the probability of student admission into a postsecondary institution with a certain level of selectivity. While different studies use different models to calculate academic undermatch, most follow a similar method: determine the highest category of postsecondary selectivity a student is eligible for given their academic standing and compare that with the student’s final choice of postsecondary enrollment. Students who enroll in an institution below the level of selectivity they are found to be eligible for, or who do not enroll at all, are considered academically undermatched. However, these studies have largely failed to examine factors beyond academic credentials, such as a student’s finances, family dynamics, institutional support
structures, and individual needs for traditionally underrepresented students. The result is a one-sided view of academic undermatch that neglects student realities beyond academic potential and prevents the identification of holistic solutions that can improve college choice and completion rates across socioeconomic boundaries.

Project Rationale
This study aims to better understand the drivers behind college choice and completion rates among Hispanic students and to equip National College Access Network (NCAN) member organizations with tools to decrease academic undermatch and improve completion rates. This research project was conducted on behalf of NCAN, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded to share best practices and spread college access and success services around the United States. NCAN’s mission is “to build, strengthen, and empower communities and stakeholders to close equity gaps in postsecondary attainment for all students.”

Recently, NCAN collected data from their member organizations and the U.S. Department of Education and determined that academic undermatch among Hispanic students is an area that merits further attention and research. At 47%, Hispanic students make up the largest proportion of students served by members who participate in NCAN’s recent benchmarking report, “Closing the College Graduation Gap: Enrollment and Completion Outcomes by Race/ Ethnicity and Gender” (the Benchmarking Project) and present the greatest opportunity for impact (Raphael & DeBaun, 2019). They also make up the largest share of first-time enrollees at two-year public institutions in the Benchmarking Project (Raphael & DeBaun, 2019), and these institutions have the lowest college completion rates of all postsecondary institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

This study focuses on answering the following primary research question:

**What is the nature of NCAN member-served Hispanic student postsecondary academic undermatch, and what can NCAN members do about it?**

To help answer this question, the following sub-research questions were explored:

1. How do NCAN member-served Hispanic student enrollment and college completion rates compare to those nationwide?
2. Is there a factor or set of factors unique to the Hispanic population that contributes to academic undermatching and college degree completion?
3. Which strategies can NCAN members employ to increase college completion rates for academically undermatched Hispanic students?

Regarding terminology, the research team believes the term *Latinx* better represents the desired focus of this study, as it encompasses Latin America and does not differentiate by spoken language. However, in 1976 the U.S. government defined *Hispanic* as “Americans of Spanish origin or descent...[or] Americans who identify themselves as being Spanish-speaking background and trace their origin or descent from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America and other Spanish-speaking countries.” Consequently, the Office of Management and Budget developed standards for collecting data on Hispanics which is used consistently among federal, academic, and private sector researchers, including NCAN (Lopez, Krogstad, & Passel, 2019). Therefore, to maintain consistency, Hispanic will be used in this study.
Literature Review

Defining Academic Undermatch
Recent higher education research has drawn attention to academic undermatch. The concept is grounded in the idea of college matching, first proposed by researchers at the University of Chicago Consortium and popularized by Bowen, Chingos, and McPherson’s 2009 book examining college completion. Matching measures the selectivity of a college or university that a student decides to attend against the selectivity of a college or university that student could have attended based on academic credentials such as grade point average (GPA), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores or American College Test (ACT) scores, and Advanced Placement (AP) coursework (Bowen et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2012).

Academic undermatching applies the theory of college matching by identifying instances where students attend colleges or universities that are less selective than they could have otherwise attended based on statistical analysis of their academic achievement (Bastedo & Flaster, 2014; Bowen et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2012). As a result of this measurement to determine the selectivity level that students qualify for and the complexity of the opportunities available, there are many variations in how academic undermatch is defined in the literature. For instance, Bastedo and Flaster (2014) define academic undermatch as when a high school graduate either does not attend college or attends a college or university that is less selective than their academic achievement. In contrast, other research limits the definition of academic undermatch only to students who apply to college, excluding students who do not pursue postsecondary education at all (Freeman, 2017).

Issues with Academic Undermatch
Researchers have recently expressed concern that academic undermatch appears to label students’ college application and acceptance decisions as right or wrong, relies on the assumption that researchers can decide which colleges are acceptable for individual students to attend, and attempts to determine what is best for students (Bastedo & Flaster, 2014; Freeman, 2016). Conceptualizing academic undermatch also requires researchers to assert that a certain type of social order exists, with high achieving students attending highly selective schools while lower achieving students attend less selective colleges and universities (Bastedo & Flaster, 2014; Downey & Genschel, 2017). Additionally, when the concept of academic undermatch is applied in the normative sense, the concept obscures valid reasons why students might choose to attend schools that are less selective than their academic achievement indicates (Bowen et al., 2009; Rodriguez, 2015; Freeman, 2017). To correct for some of the assumptions that academic undermatch makes, researchers suggest that there are many reasons why colleges might be a good fit for students regardless of their overall selectivity ranking (Rodriguez, 2015; Smith et al., 2012; Bowen et al., 2009).

There are also inherent issues with researching academic undermatch. In order to determine which schools should be ranked as highly selective, researchers group colleges and universities into a hierarchical order, or rely on third-party rankings, but there is still little consensus on definitions for selectivity and the stratification of collegiate institutions (Rodriguez, 2015; Bastedo and Flaster, 2014). Moreover, to estimate the prevalence of academic undermatch, researchers must assume that their calculations correctly predict which schools students would be admitted to, but selective colleges and universities use more holistic approaches for the college admission process than the formulas used in most studies (Bastedo and Flaster, 2014). Research has also documented regional differences that contribute to college application and acceptance decisions, making general research into undermatch unreliable (Rodriguez, 2015).
Value in Examining Academic Undermatch

Despite issues such as lack of common operationalization, presumptions and calculations, researchers still find value in studying academic undermatch and its relation to college completion. About 60% of undergraduate students complete their degrees within six years and only 32% of students enrolled at two-year colleges complete their degrees (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Students who are appropriately matched are more likely to finish their degrees, suggesting that understanding and addressing academic undermatch is important for student success (Freeman, 2017). Attending more highly selective postsecondary institutions can also provide students with broader access to the labor market, increased lifetime earnings and job satisfaction, and lower health care costs (Freeman, 2017; Bowen et al., 2009). Moreover, research suggests academic undermatch might be more prevalent within certain groups such as racial and/or ethnic minorities, first-generation college students, and low-income families (Bowen et al., 2009). Therefore, increasing understanding of academic undermatch and its effect on college completion can also help reduce stratification based on socio-economic status.

Academic Undermatch in Hispanic Communities

The Hispanic community is an especially important focus for academic undermatch with an underrepresented population in higher education and a U.S. high school graduate population projected to grow by 40% in the next decade (Rodriguez, 2015). Hispanic college enrollment in the U.S. has grown 250% from 1990 to 2010, largely as a result of Hispanic population growth. During the same period, overall growth in enrollment was 52% and enrollment among White students rose just 19% (Snyder & Dillow, 2012). One peer-reviewed study finds an even greater gap, a 487% increase in Hispanic enrollment over this period compared to 20% growth for White student college enrollment (Rodriguez, 2015). Despite this drastic growth, however, Hispanic students are still more likely to attend two-year postsecondary institutions than White students. Furthermore, as institutional selectivity levels increase, Hispanic student representation decreases (Rodriguez, 2015). Only 14% of Hispanic students enroll in the “most selective” and “very selective” four-year colleges as compared to 40% of White students (Bozick & Lauff, 2007). This indicates the access problem for Hispanic students is about equitable access to all colleges (Snyder & Dillow, 2012; Rodriguez, 2015).

Prior research has shown Hispanic students have a different experience during the college choice process from White students and suggests that academic undermatch interventions in policy and practice should be better suited to accommodate the needs of Hispanic students (Rodriguez, 2015; Naranjo 2016; Freeman, 2017). These differences may be caused in part by college costs, high school resources, parental education levels, family dynamics and language barriers. Rodriguez (2015) outlines four key components that make the Hispanic college choice process unique: (1) academic preparation and achievement, (2) perceptions of college costs and affordability, (3) networks students can access and the information they receive about college from those around them, and (4) preferences and tastes they develop for institutions.

Hispanic students are more likely to attend high schools with fewer advanced (AP/International Baccalaureate) class options and less likely to take those courses when available. This may be a result of perceptions about their academic preparation resulting from language barriers, immigrant status, cultural preferences, and socioeconomic barriers (Rodriguez, 2015; Naranjo, 2016; Freeman, 2017). This unique experience may be why there is a significant gap in the type of colleges and universities Hispanic students are prepared to attend compared to White students. Still, there are conflicting findings on whether Hispanic students apply to the most selective institutions they are qualified for, so high school academic strength may not be stopping students from applying to more selective institutions. In 1992, U.S. Department of Education data shows over 90% of students of all races and ethnicities did not apply to a
matched college. In the 2004 cohort, that improved to 66% for academically undermatched students with low socioeconomic status, compared to 56 percent for more affluent students (Smith et al., 2012). While students of a higher socioeconomic status are less likely to academic undermatch at the application stage, there has been significant improvement in that all students are more likely to apply to schools that match their academic credentials.

Strategies to Address Academic Undermatch and Degree Completion

The Hispanic student population is not a monolith; it encompasses students with a wide range of backgrounds, family education levels, socioeconomic statuses, and familiarity with the U.S. postsecondary system. It is important to avoid prescriptive programs that work for “all” Hispanic students. For that reason, the research team researched strategies tried in different subsets of the Hispanic student population.

The National College Access Network (NCAN) is focused on increasing college access for low-income, first-generation college students, and/or students from populations that are traditionally underserved by postsecondary education. This study focuses on academic undermatch and college completion for Hispanic students. Research and pilot programs attempting to address academic undermatch well before students begin college, as well as programs developed to help students remain in college, were relevant in structuring this study’s interview protocols.

While not all Hispanic students qualify for need-based programs, those that are aware of and eligible for need-based programs may find them to be a useful way to fund their postsecondary education. Once those students begin college, it is important to know whether the funds help them remain in school compared to students who did not qualify or apply for the same programs. Researchers found a positive relationship between low-income students who qualified for need-based grants like the Pell Grant and continuing their education, but this was not statistically significant (Fack & Grenet, 2015). The lack of statistical significance could mean that making college more affordable is not enough to narrow the degree attainment gap.

Freeman (2017) studied Hispanic student college decision-making by conducting focus groups in a rural, low-income meat packing community with a growing immigrant population. The community added information about the college application process into high school student’s schedules to go over complicated topics and processes that were unfamiliar for the immigrant community. This multiyear process helped increase matriculation at the local community college. The approach incorporated education, economics, cultural, and social realities of the students’ lives. Postsecondary information sharing was also made available to parents and guardians in their native language to explain why they should not consider high school to be the final step in their child’s education.

Creating a support network that was culturally sensitive to the needs of the student and their family allowed this program to help students see value in attending college. Many of these students started at the local community college, but for others, this exposure to postsecondary education options helped them leave their community and attend a four-year institution. This study is also an example of the difficulties of defining undermatch because while some institutions technically qualify as an academic undermatch they are not inherently bad. It’s “more accurate to think of [the local community college] as a provisional step for rural Hispanic students wanting to try out college before untethering themselves from family and friends and venturing forth on their own” (Freeman, 2017). A student may see community college as an opportunity to continue education when a four-year institution would be out of the question due to cost, distance, or familial obligations at that time.
Other programs have been used to promote completion of a degree once students start at a four-year college. In one example, a four-year, private nonprofit university utilized student support groups on campus and incorporated their families into the process through in-person sessions with the option to participate through video call. The university also provided resources including mentors, online courses, and tutoring for students (Bailey, 2018). This study highlighted what worked for students by limiting their interviews to Hispanic students who graduated from the institution.

Another important question in addressing undermatch and college completion rates is whether the selectivity of an academic institution makes a significant difference in student outcomes. A multivariate analysis of high achieving low-income students shows that with all other factors held equal, there was a 5% increase in bachelor’s degree completion rates for students who attended highly selective institutions over those who attended less selective institutions (Melguizo, 2010). It is less likely that students will academically undermatch at highly selective institutions, but it’s possible that less selective institutions can reproduce some of the conditions that increase graduation rates.

Data & Methodology

The project first strives to better understand the drivers behind college choice and completion rates among Hispanic students, and to equip NCAN members with tools to decrease academic undermatch and improve completion rates. The methodology uses the College Board definition that “academic undermatch occurs when a student’s academic credentials permit them access to a college or university that is more selective than the postsecondary alternative they actually choose” (Smith et al., 2012).

This study seeks to answer the main research question: what is the nature of NCAN member-served Hispanic student postsecondary academic undermatch, and what can NCAN members do about it? This question is then broken into three sub-research questions outlined below in Table 1. In order to address these questions, the study uses various methods of analysis — descriptive statistics, a survey, semi-structured interviews, and a case study. The remainder of this section outlines these methodological choices and the development and implementation of the study’s research methods.
Table 1: Research Questions & Methods of Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Research Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> How do NCAN member-served Hispanic student enrollment and college completion rates compare to those nationwide?</td>
<td>- Descriptive Statistics of NCAN and National Study Data</td>
<td>Identify and understand any notable statistical differences between the NCAN member-served Hispanic student population and the national student population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Is there a factor or set of factors unique to the Hispanic population that contributes to academic undermatching and college degree completion?</td>
<td>- Online NCAN Member Survey - NCAN Member Interviews - NCAN Member-Served Student Phone Interviews</td>
<td>Better understand the college decision-making process and barriers to degree completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Which strategies can NCAN members employ to increase college completion rates for academically undermatched Hispanic students?</td>
<td>- NCAN Member Case Study</td>
<td>Highlight an example of successful practices implemented by an NCAN member organization serving Hispanic students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 1: Studies & Descriptive Statistics

**NCAN & National Data**

To determine how the NCAN member-served Hispanic student population compares nationally, the study used data from four sources. First was NCAN’s 2018 *National College Access and Success Benchmarking Report*, which includes data from 69 NCAN member organizations and 103,065 students from the high school class of 2011. Student-level data was submitted through the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) StudentTracker system by NCAN members, where National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) matched this with NSC enrollment and completion data for the same students. NCAN members also provided student demographic and services data for inclusion. NSCRC then identified postsecondary institution attributes and aggregated student data to produce overall enrollment and completion rates for NCAN member-served students.

To compare NCAN data against a national sample, the research team used National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) Signature Report No. 14, *Completing College: A National View of Student Completion Rates – Fall 2011 Cohort*, which reviews the outcomes of 2,270,070 students in the U.S. whose first postsecondary enrollment occurred in fall 2011. The data includes more than 3,600 institutions and represents nearly 97% of enrollment. The NSCRC dataset did not include first-generation statistics, but the research team felt it was important to get a clear understanding of how the NCAN member-served first-generation Hispanic student percentage compared against a national sample. Therefore, the 2011–12 *National Postsecondary Student Aid Study* conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) was used. This study provides data on a broad array of demographic and enrollment characteristics across 95,000 undergraduate and 16,000 graduate students in the U.S.
Descriptive Statistics
The study uses simple descriptive statistics to summarize and compare the NCAN student-level data against the nationally represented NSCRC sample and address the first research question. Analysis was conducted against Hispanic student postsecondary enrollment rates across two- and four-year institutions as well as degree completion rates calculated for 150% of normal time, which is six years for a bachelor’s degree and three years for an associate’s degree.

Research Question 2: NCAN Survey & Interviews
Survey Design
This report includes primary data collection gathered from surveys and semi-structured interviews. NCAN has more than 500 member organizations that received a link to a survey via direct emails from NCAN representatives and organizational newsletter emails. The survey asked about organizational perceptions of the postsecondary aspirations and experiences of Hispanic students the member organization serves. The member survey was intended to provide a look at which factors may explain why the Hispanic population experience higher rates of academic undermatching. The survey was open for a month, and received 70 member responses, a 14% response rate. The survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

Survey Format
The short survey targeted NCAN member organization staff who serve underrepresented students. Overall, the survey was meant to capture staff experience with Hispanic students, services provided by members, and staff’s perceptions of Hispanic academic undermatch. This report compares member survey responses with semi-structured interviews of Hispanic students. This report compares those responses to highlight any misconceptions staff might have regarding Hispanic students’ postsecondary experiences. Survey respondents were also given the opportunity to provide contact information if they were interested in providing additional information about their experiences, which is how NCAN member organization interviewees were identified.

Semi-Structured Interviews
NCAN Members
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with NCAN members who expressed interest in the online survey (n = 4). These interviews covered member organization employees’ perspectives working with Hispanic students on their college decision-making process and barriers to degree completion. Interviews addressed strategies related to mitigating barriers to college access and completion and followed up on pertinent data collected in the survey for that individual. Interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded. One team member moderated the discussion and another team member took notes during the calls. The interview questions designed for NCAN members are found in Appendix B.

NCAN Member-Served Students
The research team selected students to interview through purposive sampling. NCAN provided a list of suggested students 18 years and older who are currently enrolled in college to interview. Phone interviews were conducted with students from Maryland and Rhode Island NCAN member organizations (n = 6). Student interviews provided insights regarding their experiences with postsecondary education. Student interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded. One team member moderated the discussion while another team member took notes. The interview questions designed for NCAN member-served Hispanic students are found in Appendix C.
Semi-Structured Interviews and Coding
The research team developed a codebook for coding notes from the semi-structured student interviews. The code development was theory- and structural-driven to address the project’s research questions (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011) The codebook is structured around three themes: (1) finances, (2) family obligations and (3) exposure to postsecondary opportunities. These themes were developed through the literature review, NCAN member survey and informal member staff interviews. They also help address the set of research questions NCAN hopes to address through this project. Sub-items under each theme help address the many different contexts in which a theme might appear in the interview notes.

Before coding, the interviewers reviewed their notes to ensure consistency in formatting and clarity for the coders. To establish intercoder reliability, two coders were asked to read through the notes from the interviews and select sentences and paragraphs that fit under the subcategories outlined for each them in the codebook. For the purposes of this research, without the time and resources to transcribe each student interview, the research team established intercoder reliability by matching whether the coders both had at least one paragraph or sentence from notes from a student interview under the same theme. If both coders had at least one item for a student under a theme or no items, the research team determined that to be a match.

Research Question 3: Case Study
The case study delves into The College Crusade of Rhode Island (CCRI), an NCAN member organization with a track record of effectively supporting college access and college completion for their Hispanic student population. The case study utilizes three of the research team’s semi-structured student interviews from students who participate in the organization’s programming, a semi-structured interview with CCRI employee Belisa Nunez, and publicly available information about the organization’s programming. The case study provides examples of best practices that can increase Hispanic students’ college completion rates.

Findings & Analysis
The following section analyzes data collected through a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods as described above. These analyses seek to answer how NCAN member-served Hispanic student enrollment and college completion rates compare to nationwide averages, whether there are factors unique to the Hispanic population that contribute to academic undermatching, and how NCAN members may increase college completion rates for academically undermatched Hispanic students.

1. How do NCAN member-served Hispanic student enrollment and college completion rates compare to those nationwide?

NCAN focuses on improving postsecondary support for underrepresented students, including students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and first-generation students. With the goal of closing equity gaps in postsecondary attainment for these groups, the NCAN member-served student population reflects a significantly higher proportion of Hispanic students than the national average. NCAN’s recent Benchmarking Project compared NCAN member-served student data with a nationally representative sample collected by the U.S. Department of Education National Student Clearinghouse Research Center
(NSCRC). This study analyzes the Benchmarking Project’s underlying data to focus specifically on how Hispanic student enrollment and completion rates compare across the two samples.

Enrollment
As illustrated in Figure 2, 47% of NCAN member-served first-time enrollees are Hispanic, compared to 14% in the nationally representative sample. This difference has implications for comparing the performance of NCAN member efforts to improve undermatch and college completion rates for their students against national trends. It also highlights the importance of identifying proven strategies to improve Hispanic student outcomes within NCAN member-served student communities given their representational majority.

Figure 2: First-Time Postsecondary Enrollee by Ethnicity

As shown in Figure 3, more than half of Hispanic students enrolled in two- and four-year institutions nationwide are considered first-generation. Looking at NCAN member-served student demographics, the number increases to 72%. This difference is not surprising given NCAN’s focus on improving support for underrepresented students but does increase the importance of identifying and addressing barriers unique to first-generation Hispanic students when designing support programs. It is worth noting that NCES defines first-generation college students as “those who are first in their family to attend (any type of) college.” NCAN defines the term first-generation based on “each program’s preferred definition.” It is important to note there is disagreement among researchers and institutions in defining the term, with some counting only students whose parent or guardian did not attain a bachelor’s degree. Therefore, this inconsistency should be considered when comparing these datasets.

As Figure 4 shows, NCAN member-served students attend four-year institutions at a rate four percentage points higher than the national sample, but that rate drops by two percentage points for Hispanic students. Additionally, Figure 5 illustrates NCAN member-served Hispanic students enroll in four-year public institutions at a rate ten percentage points higher than those nationally. At four-year private institutions, however, NCAN member-served student attendance is two percentage points lower than the national average. This contrast suggests either a difference in NCAN member-served student circumstances as compared to Hispanic students nationally, or in how NCAN members are supporting these students in their exploration of four-year private institutions.

The higher rate of enrollment for Hispanic students at four-year public institutions and lower rate of enrollment at two-year public institutions may signal NCAN’s success in addressing Hispanic student undermatch by focusing on boosting enrollment at four-year public institutions over two-year institutions. As studies have shown, four-year postsecondary institutions have higher degree completion rates than their two-year counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Two-year private institutional enrollment data was of such small magnitude that it is not included in the comparison.

Source: 2018 National College Access and Success Benchmarking Report & NCES 2011-2012 Academic Year Student Data
Figure 4: First-Time Enrollee First-Attended Postsecondary Institution by Type


Figure 5: First-Time Enrollee First-Attended Postsecondary Institution Type


College Completion

According to The Benchmarking Project, NCAN member-served students of color, including Hispanic students, complete postsecondary degrees at higher rates than the nationwide average but at lower rates than White students nationally (Raphael & DeBaun, 2019). This suggests that addressing undermatch and improving college completion rates for NCAN member-served Hispanic students is of great importance in closing the gap with White students. As Figure 6 shows, combined postsecondary completion rates for
NCAN member-served Hispanic students are only one percentage-point higher than Hispanic students in the national sample. This small difference suggests Hispanic students served by NCAN members may face similar obstacles to degree attainment as those nationwide. At first glance it may appear NCAN members have failed to provide adequate support to improve completion rates for their large population of Hispanic students. However, according to a recent NCAN report, national Hispanic student postsecondary enrollment and completion rates have increased significantly over the past few decades. Between 1980 and 2017, the population of Hispanic students ages 18-24 increased by a factor of 2.5 and the proportion of bachelor’s and associate’s degrees received by Hispanic students increased by 12% and 17%, respectively (DeBaun, 2019). This rapid nationwide growth should be considered when comparing NCAN member-served Hispanic student outcomes to the national sample, as improving NCAN member-served student completion rates over an already high-performing national group can be difficult.

Stop-out rates — when a student enrolled previously but left school either temporarily or permanently before completing a degree within the six-year timeframe — are four-percentage points lower for Hispanic students served by NCAN members, which could suggest NCAN support provides a benefit to prevent students from leaving school before graduating. Further research is needed to explore this small but meaningful difference and whether NCAN member programs have a causal relationship with the decrease.

Figure 6: Postsecondary Education Six-Year Outcomes for First-Time Hispanic Enrollers (Four- and Two-Year Institutions Combined)


Overall, the comparison between NCAN member-served students and the nationally representative NSCRC sample shows that Hispanic students are still more likely to attend two-year postsecondary institutions than their non-Hispanic counterparts (Figure 4). While NCAN member-served Hispanic students enroll in four-year public institutions at a higher rate than those nationwide, the nearly identical six-year outcomes for Hispanic students served by NCAN members and the national sample suggests
opportunity to increase support by NCAN members to improve college completion rates as the Hispanic postsecondary student population increases.

2. Is there a factor or set of factors unique to the Hispanic population that contributes to academic undermatching and college degree completion?

This research explores the experience of NCAN member-served Hispanic students who are enrolled in college. To better understand the driving factors behind academic undermatch, the research team developed a survey distributed to NCAN member organizations that provided information about the programs they offer, the population of students they serve, and the trends they have witnessed impacting their students. Seventy member organizations completed the survey which can be found in its entirety in Appendix A.

The survey also included an opportunity for members to participate in an interview with follow up questions to their survey responses. The research team contacted those survey volunteers and completed interviews with four program staff from NCAN member organizations. The research team also requested that NCAN help identify students willing to share their experience and conducted semi-structured interviews with six of those students. The information gathered in those interviews contributed to greater understanding of the barriers experienced by Hispanic students enrolled in NCAN member programs and their experience with college access and college degree completion. All student names have been anonymized in this report for privacy.

Through the survey and follow-up interviews, NCAN members identified challenges they believe Hispanic students face when considering which postsecondary institutions to apply to and attend. The research team also identified barriers and benefits Hispanic students experience while completing postsecondary education. Emerging themes were similar to those of Rodriguez’s findings (2015), including: (1) perceptions of college tuition costs and related expenses, (2) distance from home, (3) navigating the financial aid process, (4) academic preparation & achievement, (5) navigating the college application process, and (6) fit of the schools’ culture and demographics, including associated support structures (see Figure 8).

These concerns inform how NCAN members can help their students complete postsecondary education through mitigating common barriers. Members and students report that they and their families are less familiar with higher education, have less direct access to resources, and need culturally relevant education about the college application process.
Finances & Affordability
Finances and affordability are major components impacting academic undermatch for many of the Hispanic students NCAN members serve. Along with the direct costs of education, students also struggle to access financial aid resources. For prospective first-generation college students, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) financial aid documents that are required to apply for financial assistance can be difficult to explain to parents, requires sensitive information such as Social Security numbers, which can also cause concern about deportation for mixed status families. For undocumented students, only 19 states permit access to in-state tuition, an important aspect of affordability for attending public colleges and universities. Victoria saw the cost of travel to and from out-of-state postsecondary institutions as another barrier and didn’t want to put the added burden of transportation costs on her parents. She also had to reevaluate her top choice institution when she realized the gap between her scholarship and the total cost to attend.

Many NCAN members see students undermatch due to financial concerns. For example, students applied and/or were accepted to colleges but recognize that they are unable to close the financing gap even with Pell grants, merit grants, and other financial aid. Christian told the research group that he chose to stay close to home to leave college without debt. He is on track to complete a bachelor’s degree without taking any loans. For students who are disinclined to take out sizeable loans to close the gap, local two-year postsecondary institutions are an affordable or even free option that allow students to work while in school and maintain the option to transfer to a four-year school after two years. There is a perception that two-year postsecondary institution schedules afford more time for working or contributing in their family.

Family Obligation
NCAN members identified family obligation as a significant factor contributing to academic undermatch for their students. The NCAN members explained that parents expressed their preference for students to continue their education close to home for multiple reasons. In addition, NCAN members and students reported the importance of a close-knit family structure, which resulted in a more significant interest in
staying in close proximity to their families. Some students also reported a desire for daughters to remain close to home in order to contribute to familial responsibilities.

In the survey, NCAN members reported that their students feel compelled to continue to contribute to the family either through direct financial contributions, childcare, home care, or acting as the primary translator. Our interview with Gabrielle illuminated her concern for being far from her father. As a high school student Gabrielle helped her mother with groceries, laundry, and cooking; after her mother died her junior year of high school she took on those duties for the household. When deciding where to attend college she worried about leaving her father without household support and eventually selected a college 45 minutes away from her father. Victoria and Christian both expressed an interest to be independent and live on their own but did not want to be far away from home. They wanted to live independently while maintaining close proximity to the close-knit family support that was described by many of the students interviewees. Victoria thought moving away would lead to her being homesick, making her postsecondary education even harder.

For students in mixed status families there is also concern about students moving far away. The research team did not hear directly from students about mixed family status, but it was mentioned in NCAN member organization survey responses. The sensitivity of this particular concern could explain why it did not come up in student interviews.

Exposure to Postsecondary Opportunities
The final reason highlighted for students who undermatch academically is exposure to the college application process. By design, NCAN member organizations target students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education, including first-generation and minority students. Among NCAN member-served Hispanic students, 72% identified as first-generation by the member organization (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percentage of First-Generation NCAN Member-Served Hispanic Students

![Figure 8: Percentage of First-Generation NCAN Member-Served Hispanic Students](image)

NCAN members reported that parents do not often have direct experience with postsecondary education and need assistance navigating the process or the students will be left to make decisions on their own.
Victoria told us that even though her parents supported her going to college, they often could not help her navigate the application process. Gabrielle also navigated the college application process without substantial help from her parents. Her parents immigrated and did not have the opportunity to attend college. However, they knew it was important for her future and advised her to find schools that offered programs of interest. Her NCAN member organization connected her with students of similar backgrounds when she went on college visits to assist her in finding a good campus culture match.

For some of these parents, there is discomfort in questioning what high schools tell them. In the survey one NCAN member identified “most of these students are targeted for technical 2-year degrees or certifications as their parents won’t say no- their education background doesn’t allow them to feel comfortable advocating for their student and just agree to whatever they are told to do.” Therefore, the education track this member spotlighted could push students towards undermatch by limiting student qualifications.

In some cases, students interested in STEM are limited by the courses offered at their high schools. An NCAN member reported in the survey, “Students with aspirations to attend college to major in STEM, they attend high schools that do not offer physics or calculus - which makes them ineligible for admission although they have GPAs and test scores for admission.” If students are unable to access required courses, they be underqualified or ineligible for their desired STEM degree program. Some students also do not fully understand the future implications of college selectivity. There is an attitude that going to college at all is sufficient so there is no need to go to a school that is far away or more costly.

Participation in NCAN member programs can create far reaching benefits beyond the current student. For example, Michelle is a first-generation college student who saw her experience as a way to provide insight and exposure to the college process for her younger sister. She started in an NCAN member program that introduced the importance of SAT preparation and helped her through applications and the college selection process. Knowing her sister was watching provided her an added incentive to understand the system.
### Table 2: Emergent Research Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes for Students Experiencing Academic Undermatch</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finances</strong></td>
<td>- Challenge in paying for tuition &amp; housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Inability to complete FAFSA application due to immigration status of student and/or immediate family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Community colleges are cheaper to attend &amp; contribute to difficulty completing a 2-year institution or transferring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Obligation</strong></td>
<td>- Strong familial ties, compelling students to live at home or live near family while attending college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Parents / family rely heavily on student for translation, providing financial assistance, caregiving support, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Living away from family takes away physical support system for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposure to Postsecondary Opportunities</strong></td>
<td>- Students attend high schools lacking necessary curriculum needed for more competitive postsecondary institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students are not aware of postsecondary institution options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Low confidence, morale when applying to more competitive institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In interpreting the responses to our survey and interviews the research team identified common barriers that impact NCAN member-served student decisions about how and where to attend postsecondary education. Financial costs — including tuition, housing, travel, and additional expenses — are a significant determinant in which institution a student attends. NCAN members attempt to address this by helping students apply for or earn grants and scholarships that offset the cost of education. Several NCAN members made reference to emergency grant funds which students can apply for to cover the cost of books and other school supplies or unforeseen expenses that would otherwise prevent a student from completing their degree. These funds are intended to bridge a small gap and allow students to stay on track in their academic program.

Strong family ties are also an important consideration when students are weighing postsecondary options. Students, families, and the program staff the research team spoke with stressed the importance of family connection in physical and mental support. Some students provide financial and care support for siblings or extended family, others were more concerned about the emotional impact distance from the family support system would have on their studies and wellbeing. It is important that NCAN member programs do not over-prioritize academic match and more selective institutions over the priorities of the students themselves.

Building on the family and community connections, students and NCAN members also the importance of creating a pathway to expose students and their family to what is required, expected, and available when they are thinking about postsecondary options. NCAN members have expertise in introducing students to the necessary steps to apply to and begin postsecondary education. Some members incorporate the parents in this process early but this report also identifies including the entire family as a best practice to
set an example for future family or community members to follow. As postsecondary education becomes less of a mystery the students will have more known paths to success.

3. Which strategies can NCAN members employ to increase college completion rates for academically undermatched Hispanic students?

**Case Study: The College Crusade of Rhode Island**

NCAN identified The College Crusade of Rhode Island to provide an in-depth explanation of their college access and completion programs. The case study details key program components, provides context about student decision making, and identifies strategies an NCAN member employs to increase college completion rates for academically undermatched Hispanic students.

This case study is informed by semi-structured student interviews with three students who have participated in The College Crusade of Rhode Island. A staff member completed the NCAN member survey about their program and student population and indicated they were available to answer further questions about their organization. After the survey they agreed to a semi-structured interview to learn more about their responses. The research team also looked at the publicly available program information on The College Crusade of Rhode Island website. The majority of information is available in both English and Spanish. Because this is a single case design it would be inappropriate to generalize the results to a broader environment, but the information is useful when used in concert with the survey data and interviews with other program participants.

The research team conducted semi-structured interviews with three participants and a program counselor from The College Crusade of Rhode Island (CCRI). This member organization was identified by NCAN for their robust programming. CCRI describes themselves as “the state’s most comprehensive college-readiness and scholarship program for middle school and high school students in low-income urban school districts.” The students interviewed participated in school-based CCRI programs from middle school (6th grade) through their current college experience.

Belisa Nunez is the CCRI College Success Coach who agreed to speak with the research team about the program they implement and the community in which they work. She explained they begin student recruitment starting in 5th grade and support students from middle school through college completion.

**Program Key Practices:**

1. Starts working with students in middle school to build a foundation of college-readiness
2. Student participation levels translate directly to scholarship dollars
3. Exposes students to college options with campus visits and counseling appointments

To protect student privacy the student names in this report have been anonymized. The research team interviewed Gabrielle, Joanna, and Victoria, current college students who were accepted into CCRI in 6th grade. At that time, they were assigned their College Crusade advisors and began the academic enrichment, personal development, career exploration, and college application assistance. Some of the program elements are mandatory based on grade level, while electives are selected by students and their families to align with their specific interest areas.

Ms. Nunez indicated that although many of the students they work with do not have established paths to college, they may be interested in attending but do not know how. CCRI focuses on mapping out a pathway to demonstrate how to make college attainable for their students. She also mentioned that financial concerns associated with college are a contributor to stress within the student population —
there have been students who earned scholarships to cover full tuition or extensive financial aid, but if there was even a small gap, $2,000 for example, the student may not be able to attend.

CCRI programs are directly aligned to the student and parent concerns about the costs of college by tying student participation directly to scholarship levels. Program participants earn a tiered CCRI scholarship (gold, silver, bronze) for tuition and related expenses based on the number of hours students participate in training, enrichment, and college information sessions over the years of the program. This approach mixes intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to help students feel invested in their postsecondary education from start to finish. Students select the programming they participate in from the available options based on their needs and interests. Connecting scholarships to student actions is an highly effective way to incentivize continued participation through middle and high school.

CCRI utilizes multiple funding streams in order to provide these services to Rhode Island communities that need them most. Nearly 75% of their funding comes from government grants and support including a U.S. Department of Education program called Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program (GEAR UP). GEAR UP is focused on increasing student preparation for postsecondary education in low-income communities. They specifically provide discretionary grants for programs that implement in high-poverty communities that begin services by 7th grade. According to 2016 data, 84% of Crusaders enrolled in postsecondary education within one year of graduating high school and 76% of that group continue to a second year. For Crusaders who attend four-year postsecondary institutions 83% continue through their second year.

The students interviewed in for this report are part of that success. Gabrielle learned about CCRI early in junior high and applied to the program with the intention to fulfill her parents’ hopes that she would pursue her dreams and lead a better life than them through higher education. She is now a junior at the University of Rhode Island. She is the daughter of immigrant parents who were unable to pursue higher education and is the first of her siblings to attend college. Gabrielle’s older brother completed high school, then immediately entered the work force full time. As a first-generation student, she was not familiar with the higher education system. CCRI was a major influence in her understanding of postsecondary options.

Her experience with the program was centered on her long-standing relationship with her CCRI advisor from 9th to 11th grade. This advisor has continued to be a resource and is the on-campus College Success Coach at the university she now attends. The advisor met with her individually, introduced her to colleges she had never heard of before, and helped her complete the correct coursework to be eligible for college. Her participation in CCRI connected her to information and resources she did not realize she would need to apply to colleges. Gabrielle explained that although she received strong encouragement from her parents, they were not able to help her make the decisions and navigate the college application process. Their lack of experience with this very complex system made her success as a first-generation student even more dependent upon the CCRI program for information and access.

Joanna is an immigrant whose mother is unfamiliar with the U.S. postsecondary education process. Like Gabrielle, she used CCRI as her primary source of information about college. She learned how to apply to college, what her options were, and how she would be able to afford tuition and related expenses. The only other resource she used was advice from members of her church. The CCRI program helped her identify what kind of career she wanted to pursue and then helped her find a degree program that would make that attainable. Joanna found it very useful to learn what to expect in college from current students and professors that she met through CCRI programs. She said that seeing these schools firsthand was very
informative. Joanna is currently completing her second year at a two-year school with the intention to transfer to a four-year degree program at the end of the year. She plans to transfer to one of the CCRI partner schools she was introduced to while in the high school program.

Another CCRI student, Victoria, is enrolled in an intensive biology program at a four-year institution and was struggling academically. One advisor suggested that she switch to an easier major, but she reached out to another advisor from high school who encouraged her to remain in the biology degree program. Strong relationships with mentors who know and understand the student are an integral part of the CCRI program. Growing up, Victoria’s parents were proponents of her going to college to improve her life. While her father completed college in his home country, he was not well-prepared to assist her. Her mother was wary of sharing her Social Security number and other information for financial aid forms. Information from CCRI helped in that process. After finishing her bachelor’s degree, Victoria intends to continue to a Physician’s Assistant program.

Ms. Nunez told us about a new program that targets highly selective institutions for Crusaders if there to help address the undermatch issue within the CCRI student population. This program will help students increase involvement in extracurricular activities that are highly valued in the application process and direct students with strong academic potential towards selective postsecondary institutions. Further expanding the network of postsecondary institutions CCRI partners with will also help incentivize more students to enroll at selective institutions.

Joanna, Gabrielle, and Victoria were all recommended to participate in this study by the member organization so it is important to remember that these are likely students who have excelled in the program and are not necessarily representative of the experience of all CCRI students.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Academic Undermatch or College Fit?

This study aimed to better identify the drivers behind college choice and completion rates among Hispanic students and provide NCAN members with greater insight into tools that might decrease academic undermatch and increase postsecondary completion. Academic undermatch is an area of focus because previous research suggests it is an important indicator of postsecondary access and long-term success. However, this study’s research revealed issues with applying the concept of academic undermatch to the NCAN member population, which created concern about the usefulness of the concept of academic undermatch.

In many ways, academic undermatch is a deficit model which seeks to understand students’ choices by “gauging a student’s social digressions or cultural shortcomings” (Freeman, 2017, p. 90). Through this research it became apparent that focusing solely on academic undermatch concealed the myriad factors that influence how and why students select their postsecondary institutions. NCAN members and member-served students identified social, cultural, geographic, and financial complexities behind school choice. The data show students consider college fit over the single metric of academic match. Many students voiced desires to attend schools near home and family, schools with robust support services available, and those that minimized financial strain.

Unlike academic undermatch, college fit can include “a wide array of determinants such as cultural and economic background, familismo, proximity to home, community social capital, academic preparation, campus culture, student life activities and supports, and college affordability” (Freeman, 2017, p. 90). This measure provides a more accurate, holistic view into students’ postsecondary decision-making process.
Complex and unique academic and non-academic factors influenced where students sought their education, aligning school choice with their realities and priorities. Moreover, it is hard to argue that students’ decisions to deprioritize attending the most selective schools when other schools better fit their needs fits into the category of academic undermatch. The data revealed the importance of matching students to schools with the best overall fit and providing ways to help that student succeed rather than push students toward academically matched institutions.

In order to address NCAN concerns around member-served Hispanic students completing postsecondary education at lower rates, it is important to provide students with access to support while on campus. The research team heard from students that their perception of college fit extended to finding institutions where sufficient resources were available to help them complete their course of study. Therefore, the recommendation is to direct students to resources at their postsecondary institution to help continue toward program completion. This can come in the form of on-campus advising, funds for secondary education expenses, and intentional community building to help students acclimate to life on campus. It is essential that students feel supported by the postsecondary institution they choose to attend or they will face more difficulty in completing their degree.

Disproportionate Numbers Among Data Samples
The research team initially began by comparing NCAN member-served Hispanic student enrollment and completion rates to nationally representative data. The following key findings are based on longitudinal data for fall 2011 first-time postsecondary education enrollees from the annual NCAN Benchmarking Report on member-served students and nationally representative data from the U.S. Department of Education National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC).

- 53% of NCAN member-served students were Hispanic while NSCRC data shows Hispanic students only account for 13% of the student population for fall 2011 college enrollees nationally.
- Non-Hispanic students received degrees within six years at a higher rate than Hispanic students in the NCAN sample (54%/50%), but the difference was more pronounced in the national sample (67%/49%).
- For both the NCAN (41%/33%) and NSCRC national sample (43%/31%), Hispanic students were more likely to attend a two-year college than non-Hispanic students.

This data highlights significant differences between the student population served by NCAN member organizations versus the national student makeup. Students eligible for NCAN member programs are more likely to be minority students with low socioeconomic status, but among the Hispanic population, member-served students still graduate at about the same rate, or slightly higher, than in the national population. Approximately 75% of Hispanic NCAN member-served students are considered first-generation students, significantly higher than the nationwide average.

Recommendations
From our findings, this report proposes the following recommendations and focus areas for NCAN members working to improve postsecondary outcomes for Hispanic students:

1. Engage & educate families early
2. Meet students where they are
3. Consider two-year institutions as a bridge to four-year degrees
4. Offer less restrictive forms of financial support
5. Increase college support services
6. Use student feedback to inform program development

Engage & Educate Families Early
In the NCAN member survey and in student interviews, findings show many students and their families struggled to define a clear path of how students get from middle school through college. Families that do not have experience with the postsecondary system benefit from early family involvement and education about what is required when pursuing a postsecondary education. The research team recommends that NCAN members host family information sessions that include parents, grandparents, siblings, and other family members and guardians. This family-based approach underscores the theme of strong familial ties identified in this report. Many families want to support their students but are not sure how. Education sessions that introduce the family to required coursework, test preparation, applications, and the financial aid process early on are proven to improve students’ educational outcomes.

This is borne out of the evidence that informed the U.S. Department of Education GEAR UP program. The program was created exclusively to fund college preparation programs that start by 7th grade. They have seen the benefit of introducing the community to college early on and getting them working toward applications and supporting students through college graduation. Some NCAN members already provide educational programs for the family, but this report recommends that more member organizations use this approach and provide translations or have native-speaking community members run the programming.

Meet Students Where They Are
Finances are an extreme burden on students when deciding where to attend college. Even if a student receives scholarships that cover most of a school’s tuition, other expenses can still make the cost of going away to school prohibitive. NCAN members should consider each student’s individual circumstances, values, and interests when identifying and recommending institutions. If desired by the student, having family nearby to provide support during this major life transition should be considered an asset, and appropriate postsecondary institutions should be encouraged.

Less focus should be placed on academic undermatch. Instead, NCAN member organizations should work with students to build a college access roadmap that prioritizes support systems and postsecondary completion strategies. Students have needs beyond academics and those needs should be accepted and accommodated. This includes accommodating and encouraging students attending reputable two-year institutions as a starting place in their pursuit of a college degree.

College choice is not one-size-fits-all. Different solutions and pathways towards postsecondary completion exist. When guiding students towards postsecondary education, their interests and needs should be considered as much as their academic qualifications and competitiveness. This is of particular importance for nontraditional students, first-generation students, and students from underrepresented groups, all variables that may be missing at more selective institutions.

Consider Two-Year Institutions as a Bridge to Four-Year Degrees
Attending a two-year institution can help students take the first step towards achieving a four-year degree. Tuition costs are often much lower at two-year institutions, allowing students to begin their degree without the financial burden many four-year institutions impose. Completing basic courses at two-year institutions before matriculating to a four-year institution can help reduce the financial burden of a college education. NCAN members should consider how this option expands student postsecondary
opportunities and how they can support students who select this option. This approach addresses previous research findings that where a student pursues postsecondary education is important in increasing chance of degree completion and long-term economic stability (Baker et al., 2018).

Many two-year institutions have strong student support services which can help underrepresented students make a smoother transition into college life. This is of particular importance for Hispanic students, who enroll at two-year institutions at higher rates than other students. In some cases, there are also more regional two-year schools for students to choose from, allowing them to stay close to family and other support systems. Because of open admission policies, course schedules, lower costs, and relationships with local businesses, two-year institutions provide college access to a wider range of students. While two-year schools vary widely in quality of education and support services, NCAN members should identify institutions with the reputation and infrastructure to support Hispanic student success and incorporate them as an initial postsecondary option.

When two- and four-year institutions coordinate to align course requirements and transfer processes, students can experience significant benefits. NCAN members should consider the Virginia “Guaranteed Transfer” program as a guiding example of coordination between two- and four-year institutions. Through systemwide agreements, students who receive an associate’s degree with a minimum GPA from any of Virginia’s two-year schools are guaranteed admission to more than thirty of the state’s four-year institutions. NCAN members should work with two- and four-year institutions in close proximity to each other to ensure courses are transferrable and that students are fully supported by both schools during the transition. Students who lack the academic standing required for more selective four-year institutions can also improve their performance and gain eligibility to more selective schools by beginning their postsecondary education at two-year institutions.

Provide Financial Support Beyond Tuition
Programs where students can apply for unrestricted grant or gift funding can help address the financial barriers that colleges and universities cannot address in yearly scholarships and loan funding packages for tuition expenses. These programs may be supported with the internal allocation of an organization’s funding, through local partnerships, or a combination of sources.

Unsurprisingly, NCAN members and member-served students overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of finances for choosing where to attend school and complete a college degree. While many colleges and universities offer significant scholarships to assist or fully cover tuition, students still need to contend with the cost of housing, travel, food, books, supplies, and other essential but indirect costs of a college education.

NCAN members noted that, in some cases, even the cost of replacing a flat tire could prevent a student from getting to class and cause them to drop out of school. The College Crusade of Rhode Island found an expense of $2,000 can be insurmountable for some of their students. Members also note that some students are also partially responsible for their family’s finances which can prevent students from going to school far from home or require them to juggle multiple jobs with classes and homework.

Increase Postsecondary Support Services through Focusing on Social Connections
Research has shown that protective and promotive factors can help adolescents to modify the impact of risks (e.g. risk of failing to complete college) (Zimmerman et al, 2013). Protective and promotive factors are developed out of a strengths-based approach, rather than a deficit model to examine what supports young people need to succeed. This theory also identifies young people’s relationships to adults as a
protective factor. Relationships with both familial and non-familial adults, parents, caregivers, and mentors increase young people’s social connections, which research has shown makes young people feel safe and secure and limits their exposure to negative outcomes.

During student interviews, many students identified the importance of their mentors, advisors, church members, and other supportive adults in their decisions to attend and continue their postsecondary education, even during challenging times. Some students even returned to their high school advisors for support when experiencing academic challenges in college. Postsecondary programs should increase students’ awareness about and access to campus community programs that provide young people with opportunities to grow critical social connections that offer them support throughout their academic journeys. In addition, schools should ensure that students have access to individualized campus advising for first-generation students. Facilitating the development of social connections with trusted adults is critical for young people as they navigate the challenges and successes associated with reaching their academic goals.

Use Student Feedback to Inform Program Development
Student interviews provided some of the most useful insight about students’ experiences and provided valuable ideas about how programs can be improved to better support students. The research team gathered firsthand information about how students perceive the effectiveness of programming offered through NCAN members and what support students need once on college campuses. Because of the wealth of information that students provide, it is recommended that NCAN members take steps to formalize a process that collects in-depth data from high school students and current college students that have completed NCAN programs to implement continuous quality improvement and uniform outcomes for NCAN programs. For example, NCAN members might regularly interview students or host listening sessions and include NCAN served student feedback into future program development.

Research Limitations
This project’s research offers a framework for best practices to address Hispanic student academic undermatch for NCAN member organizations. The report has a narrow scope developed for NCAN and was developed over an approximately four-month period, from August to December 2019. In this section, several limitations are outlined for this report ranging from sample populations and research methods to important terminology choices.

Student Data Variables & Comparison
U.S. Department of Education data from the National Center for Education Statistics offers nearly 10,000 variables in the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009, however, this data could not be compared against NCAN’s available data for 2011 first-time college enrollees. Recoding thousands of data points such as numerical codes for colleges was not feasible given this study’s time constraints. Alternative government datasets allowed comparison among the same class of first-time college enrollees but had less variables available.

While NCAN has over 100,000 member-served students in their dataset, there are a few dozen variables, significantly less than available in the government data. The variables do not provide sufficient
information to calculate academic undermatch for the NCAN population, but enables the comparison of outcomes against a nationally representative sample of students from the same time period using the U.S. Department of Education NSCRC annual report for fall 2011 first-time college enrollees.

**Limited Samples for Qualitative Analysis**
Time constraints likely limited the number of survey respondents from NCAN member organizations and resulted in a smaller selection of members and students available for interviews. While the qualitative analysis of interviews was intended to supplement data and past findings, it lacks the external validity of a larger sample size. In fact, several of the students interviewed reside in the same state. While this was important to build a case study, a larger and randomized sample of Hispanic students and staff serving Hispanic students would be more representative.

**Member Survey & Interview Participation Bias**
Individuals volunteering to complete a survey and participate in an interview will most likely have stronger thoughts and opinions than those who chose or were unable to participate. In addition, survey respondents were asked to provide contact information if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. This willingness again introduces participation bias for those willing to both respond to the survey and take the time for an interview on the subject.

**Student Interview Selection Bias**
The student interviews were conducted with students referred to the research team by NCAN member groups that reached out to past students. These students were thus more likely to have a better experience with the program because they keep in touch with advisors and opted into interviews which typically took about 30 minutes to one hour. The student interviewees also had similar socioeconomic status, upbringing, and academic qualifications. This small sample of students cannot be considered representative of the much larger population of NCAN member-served students.

**Phone Interviews**
Due to limited time and resources, all interviews with students and members were conducted by phone. The ability to conduct interviews in person could have allowed researchers to build more personal connections and understand interviewees’ emotions by seeing facial expressions, improving the interviews.

**Interview Transcriptions**
Due to limited time and resources, interviews with students and NCAN member organizations were not perfectly transcribed. In addition to the notes and audio the research team recorded, transcribing the interviews would provide a more formal measure of intercoder reliability and allow for more detailed analysis of responses.

**Negative Connotation of Academic Undermatch**
While academic undermatch may be a factor in postsecondary completion rates, this phenomenon is not a sole predictor for postsecondary degree completion rates. The report findings suggest that academic undermatch is a deficit approach to understanding student experiences and choices. It also fails to incorporate the holistic needs of students pursuing postsecondary education.
Grouping Students as “Hispanic”
The term “Hispanic” excludes some students who identify as Latino or Latina, also known at Latinx. The research team chose to use the term “Hispanic” to align with U.S. government categorizations, past studies, and available data sources. However, the study recognizes that “Hispanic” does not include all people who identify as Latinx.

For Future Research
Given the research limitations outlined above, and the scope of the current project, the research team identified several areas for future research to better understand how to support Hispanic students in meeting their postsecondary goals.

Gender and Postsecondary Experiences
Additional research beyond ethnicity and class status may help show how gender and other personal identifiers shape postsecondary degree attainment. This report finds that familial responsibility is one of three main themes that may be more pronounced for Hispanic college students. Female family members often take on a significant amount of household responsibility (Frank & Hou, 2015). Future research may explore whether this theme effects students differently when broken down by gender regarding selecting postsecondary opportunities based on responsibilities and whether these responsibilities effect rates of degree attainment.

Additionally, growing research shows that a significant number of Hispanic young people identify as LGBTQ+ (Cohen et al., 2018). To best support all students in reaching their postsecondary goals, future research may want to consider unique challenges experienced by transgender, non-binary, gender queer, and gender expansive Hispanic youth navigating postsecondary opportunities and how best to support these communities.

Assessing the Impact of For-Profit Institutions
Cottom (2017) argues that for-profit schools disproportionately impact low-income, minority, and female students with significant debt and limited career advancement. While the data used in this study showed very small percentages of students attending for-profit institutions, this is a potential area for future research to explore if a greater percentage of first-generation students attend these institutions.

Immigration Policies and Implications for College Attainment
While this project assesses several issues that are specific to Hispanic and immigrant communities, the impact of immigration policies on students could be explored further in additional studies. Future research might address how changes to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) impacts students, how undocumented students navigate applying for and receiving financial aid, and how hostile or welcoming local policies effect how students apply for postsecondary opportunities.

Identifying Differences in Outcomes Based on Varying Levels of Support
This report finds that additional support may be needed for Hispanic students currently enrolled in postsecondary institutions to improve degree completion rates. Future research might examine differences in postsecondary attainments and outcomes for students who have access to support throughout their NCAN member program to better assess what support is most needed for degree attainment.
Expanding the Reach of College Access Programs

Many of the programs highlighted in this report focus their college access efforts on local schools and programs. In order to better match students to schools that they express an interest in attending and are eligible to attend, future research should identify specific strategies for college access programs to scale up their efforts, helping students visit and enroll in more selective schools that may be out of a student’s immediate geographic region.

Concrete Supports to Enable Students to Take Advantage of Out of State Opportunities

Through semi-structured interviews with NCAN member-served students and interviews with NCAN members, this report recommends focusing on providing greater support to students that want to attend out-of-state schools but lack the financial resources to go on a college tour or pay for the travel, housing, and expenses related to attending a school far from home. More research is needed to identify best practices in financially supporting students to access selective postsecondary programs outside their immediate region.

Expanding the College Access Conversation to Non-Traditional Students

Recent research has shown that students of color and students of low-income are also more likely to be non-traditional students. The Department of Education defines non-traditional students as students who are over the age of 24, live off-campus, have familial and work responsibilities, as well as other life circumstances that might interfere with successful completion rates. In addition, 43% of Hispanic students have gone to school part-time for at least a portion of their postsecondary education (Shapiro et al., 2017). More research is needed to better understand how to best support non-traditional students in reaching their academic goals, especially as many of these students might also be Hispanic, first-generation, and/or low-income.

Understanding Experiences and Needs of Transfer Students

Beginning postsecondary studies at a two-year institution and then transferring to a four-year institution can make postsecondary attainment more accessible for students. However, student interviewees that transferred from two- to four-year institutions felt like they had limited support making the transfer and acclimating to a new school. This transition can create additional barriers to completing a college education. More research is needed to better understand how NCAN member programs can support students planning to matriculate to four-year colleges from two-year institutions.

Conclusion

Supporting students, especially those from traditionally underrepresented communities, in college access and degree attainment is critical for improving economic mobility. This research began with a strong emphasis on academic undermatch as an indicator for college success. However, through research, data analysis, and qualitative methods, the research team concluded that a more comprehensive approach to college access through college fit provides better insight into the barriers students face in achieving their academic goals. Therefore, the research team suggests a shift from academic undermatch to college fit, a student-centered approach that prioritizes a holistic student experience. This approach equips NCAN member organizations with a framework to better serve their student population and address inequities in higher education access.
References


Appendix A
National College Access Network Member Survey

Thank you for your NCAN membership! NCAN is conducting a short survey related to the post-secondary aspirations and experiences of Hispanic students. This survey contributes to the work of a team of researchers from the George Washington University’s Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration.

The survey examines the concept of “academic undermatching,” which the College Board defines as “when a student’s academic credentials permit them access to a college or university that is more selective than the college or university alternative they actually choose.” This survey will cover topics like staff experiences with Hispanic students, the services your program provides, and your perceptions of undermatching. The estimated completion time is less than 10 minutes, and the answers you provide will be extremely valuable to NCAN. You will have the option at the end of the survey to provide more information to the research team if you so choose.

We are grateful for your time and your attention to this survey. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact Bill DeBaun, Director of Data and Evaluation, at debaubn@collegeaccess.org.

Which types of services does your organization provide? Select all that apply.

- Early awareness (elementary and middle grades)
- College access (grades 9 - 12)
- College success (services to students who have completed high school and who are currently enrolled in or considering enrolling in college)
- Career success (services to students to provide students with career skills and knowledge and connect them with a career pathway)
- Other - Please Explain

What percentage of your student population identifies as Hispanic?

- Greater than 50% of students
- Between 25 and 50% of students
- Between 5 and 25% of students
- Fewer than 5% of students
- Unsure

Broadly speaking, is this percentage representative of your community’s Hispanic Population?

- Yes
- No – Please Explain

Approximately what percentage of your students have parents or legal guardians who graduated from college or university?

- 75 - 100%
- 50 - 75%
- 25 - 50%
To your knowledge, how do the students you serve receive information on the institutions to which they apply? (select all that apply)

- Advice from teachers
- Advice from college counselors
- Advice from friends and/or family
- Outreach from colleges and universities
- Advice from the organization I work with
- Advice from another organization
- Other - Please Explain

What are 3 - 5 of the most prevalent services your organization provides to students and/or their families?

[Paragraph response box]

Does your organization provide services specifically to improve Hispanic student post-secondary attainment?

- Yes - Please explain any services
- No

How do you help students identify the post-secondary institutions to which they apply and attend?

[Paragraph response box]

How do you think the services you provide influence the institutions to which students matriculate?

- Students are better prepared for standardized pre-college tests
- Students are better able to navigate the college application process
- Students are better able to navigate the financial aid process
- Students are more academically qualified
- Students are more involved with extracurricular activities
- Students are more open to applying to selective institutions when qualified
- Other - Please Describe

Does your program advise students to apply to the most selective institutions to which they are likely to be admitted?

- Yes
- No

Approximately how often do the students you serve matriculate to the most selective institution to which they were admitted?

- More than 75% of the time
- 50 - 75% of the time
- 25 - 50% of the time
- Less than 25% of the time
What concerns are most often raised by students and/or their parents, guardians, or caregivers about colleges and universities? Select all that apply.

- Cost of college tuition and related expenses
- Distance from home
- Navigating the application process
- Navigating the financial aid process
- Academic qualifications
- Other - Please Describe

Have you noticed academic undermatch within your client population?

- Yes - Across all students
- Yes - Only with some student populations (please describe)
- No - Our students do not experience academic undermatch in a noticeable way

Based on your experience, what factors contribute to students experiencing academic undermatch?

- [Paragraph response box]

Do you believe there is a factor or set of factors commonly observed among your Hispanic student population, specifically, that contributes to their experiencing academic undermatch? If so, what are the factors you observe?

- Yes - Please Describe
- No

Have you employed strategies to increase college completion rates for academically undermatched Hispanic students?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how effective or ineffective have you found them?

- [Paragraph response box]

Is there anything else you would like to include regarding academic undermatch among students, especially Hispanic students, served by your organization?

- [Paragraph response box]

Which of the following best describe your organization? (select all that apply)

- Community-based nonprofit
- Scholarship provider
- Youth-serving or mentoring organization
- Research organization
- K-12 public school district
- K-12 charter school
- College or university
- Other higher education institution
• Foundation
• State agency
• For-profit company
• Other - please describe

Are you interested in providing more in-depth responses about the Hispanic population your program serves?

• Yes - How can we best contact you?
• No

We are grateful for your time and your attention to this survey. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact Bill DeBaun, Director of Data and Evaluation, at debaub@collegeaccess.org.
NCAN Member Survey Responses

Which types of services does your organization provide? Select all that apply.

57 Responses

- College access (grades 9 - 12) (51 responses)
- College success (46 responses)
- Career success (32 responses)
- Early awareness (grades K-8) (20 responses)
- Other - Please Explain (6 responses)

6 Responses

Other - Please Explain - Text

College awareness (grades 7-8)
Our college access begins in the 8th grade.

Policy advocating

SAT/ACT Test Prep

Scholarships
We provide knowledge and skills through our college and career readiness curriculum for early awareness and success targeting middle schools.
College access (grades 9 - 12)
College success (services to students who have completed high school and who are...)
Career success (services to students to provide students with career skills and ...)
Early awareness (elementary and middle grades)
Other - Please Explain

33%
30%
21%
13%
4%
What percentage of your student population identifies as Hispanic?

57 Responses

- Greater than 50% of students: 26 responses
- Between 25 and 50% of students: 12 responses
- Between 5 and 25% of students: 13 responses
- Fewer than 5% of students: 4 responses
- Unsure: 2 responses

- Unsure: 4%
- Fewer than 5% of students: 7%
- Between 5 and 25% of students: 23%
- Between 25 and 50% of students: 21%
- Greater than 50% of students: 46%
Broadly speaking, is this percentage representative of your community's Hispanic population?

44 Responses

Yes 37

No - Please Explain 7

7 Responses

No - Please Explain - Text

Higher than the percentage for Dallas, but nearly all white families enroll students not in DallasISD public schools and DallasISD public schools have higher percentages of Hispanics (and other underrepresented in college students) for this reason.

Our organizations % of students is based on this year and the community Census is from 2010.

Our student group is comprised of near 60% Hispanic students, nationally, while the U.S. population of high school students is roughly 20%

Overrepresented

The Austin metro area 2010 census data reports that only about 32% of people in the area are Hispanic/Latino.

The Hispanic population of the greater Philadelphia region, is over to 12%

our Hispanic community is still coming of age. The majority of our Hispanic students are in grades K-6.
Approximately what percentage of your students have parents or legal guardians who graduated from college or university?

45 Responses

- 0% - 25%: 36 responses (80%)
- 25% - 50%: 8 responses (18%)
- 50% - 75%: 1 response (3%)
- 75% - 100%: 0 responses (0%)
To your knowledge, how do the students you serve receive information on the institutions to which they apply? Select all that apply.

45 Responses

- Organizations I work with: 41 responses
- College counselors: 37 responses
- Teachers: 37 responses
- Higher Ed Institutions: 31 responses
- Friends/family: 30 responses
- Other organizations: 18 responses
- Other - Please Explain: 3 responses

3 Responses

Other - Please Explain - Text

Faith based churches etc

We have found it extremely difficult to combat local community colleges and county promise programs that push community college as an option (but often a preferred option). Teachers are under the impression the Dallas County Promise program is a scholarship (because that's what they call it), even though it only offers money to students who do not already receive the funds needed to attend community college from their grants and outside scholarships. More than 90% of students receive at least the $1,770 needed to attend community college after filing the FAFSA (or TASFA for state funding for undocumented students), and ultimately the marketing leads students who ALREADY HAD FREE TUITION THROUGH GRANTS to think they are getting a scholarship by choosing community college. The local community colleges saw a 35% enrollment bump after year one of the promise program. We saw an immediate drop off in 4-year enrollment at the same time. This alone is a MASSIVE problem and huge source of info in students' ears.

college prep programs offered through their schools
What are 3 - 5 of the most prevalent services your organization provides to students and/or their families?

42 Responses

- College Preparedness Mentoring
- College Access Counseling
- Tutoring Assistance
- Workshops to Families Regarding Financial Aid
- Workshops with the school community to navigate college transition
- Leadership development
- Supportive community
- Scholarship obtainment

1 - College Awareness and Readiness (Access)
2 - Math and Writing Support as well as SAT test prep
3 - Financial Aid Information and FAFSA/CSS completion support

1) Financial Literacy
2) Subsidized Counseling and Legal Advice
3) Career Development and Counseling

1. Understand and plan for the college admissions
2. Financial aid, and scholarship process.
3. Each year, students are introduced to workshops, topics, and discussions that help them to better understand and prepare for the college search and college admission process.
4. Our students receive timelines and newsletters
5. They attend Crosby Scholar Academies, and participate in community service.

1. College and career readiness curriculum - taught by the teacher (train the trainer model)
2. Parent Workshops - led by the teacher (train the trainer)

1. College prep through ACT, essay writing, and other college readiness topics.
2. FAFSA assistance
3. Scholarship support

Academic and social support in middle school and high school.
Assistance completing financial aid applications.
Assistance completing college applications.

Academic readiness
College counseling
College readiness

Adult Mentor from 7-12 grades focused on college access, college visits, Success services - navigation coach, awareness, readiness, access and success grades k-completion.

Application support
FAFSA support
Scholarship support

Cohort-based programming to strengthen sense of belonging,
Pre-college training on summer melt prevention,
college success strategies, leadership and psychosocial development
College training on college success strategies, leadership and psychosocial development
Near-peer coaching
Text-based nudging year-round

College Access and College Success Workshops
on college readiness, academic success
Individualized College Counsellors

College Application Assistance, Waivers for SAT/ACT tests, assistance with filing the FAFSA, informing students that college is attainable

College Exploration, College application process, Financial Aid Application, Scholarship Research, and Guidance.
College Preparation, Access Professional Skill Development Career Development

College Signing Day FAFSA Application Campaign College Application Campaign

College awareness conversations with students ages 12-15 College Application support to seniors Financial Support to seniors with FAFSA & Scholarships

College campus visits, application and scholarship support, financial aid explanation, financial award explanation and breakdown, summer melt services

College counseling College success advisement College access resources

College counseling early awareness FAFSA assistance - including verification support

College enrollment support (FAFSA, application, registration) College exploration (college selection, degree planning, advising) College support (assist with class scheduling, tutoring, book purchasing, mentoring)

College information, College Application help, Financial Aid Application help, Needs-Based Scholarship provision

College list building and application assistance (including essays) Financial aid application assistance (including award letter comparison)

College list completion. Financial aid award letter review. College enrollment support. Mentoring during the first year postsecondary.

College placement, test preparation, financial aid assistance

College preparation, college access and college completion services.

College savings, college financial planning strategies, scholarships

College success - application etc Career discovery Civic engagement Leadership development

College tours, college counseling, FAFSA completion assistance

Comprehensive educational advising from 8th grade to & through college, scholarships for high school and college (including for summer experiences), and a vibrant scholar and parent community

Financial aid college advising (advising tailored to individual student’s needs for financial aid). aka finding schools they can get into AND pay for for four years. To do this we do everything from ED apps to need met schools to all scholarship and state/private apps, to financial aid applications (CSS, FAFSA, TASFA) and verification.

Financial support in the form of fee free, interest free loans, scholarships; Advising-academic, financial & personal; paid internships

Hispanic Family Night (essentially an Open House provided entirely in Spanish) Scholarship from our program and support for college access/success regardless of documentation status A Latino College and Resource Fair where funds from the fair vendors provide a scholarship to a local Latino student
Individual and group advising related to the college access process. Fee waivers for college entrance exams and college applications. Need and merit aid to pay for college Community-based college access workshops and seminars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership development</th>
<th>Cultural competency</th>
<th>High school to college transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentorship and emotional support</th>
<th>College application guidance</th>
<th>Financial aid application support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Success</th>
<th>High School Success</th>
<th>College Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly in-school academic sessions</th>
<th>Summer programming</th>
<th>Information about relevant resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>financial aid assistance, entrance exam prep and socio-cultural awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>financial scholarship awards, financial literacy, opportunity to develop savings habit through IDA program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mentoring counseling college readiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Does your organization provide services specifically to improve Hispanic student postsecondary attainment?

45 Responses

No: 24 Responses
Yes - Please explain: 21 Responses

19 Responses

Yes - Please explain any services - Text

1. Up to $750 in scholarships provided to each student per semester while they are in college. 2. MSW counselors reach out once a month. 3. We proved quarterly webinars. 4.

71% of our students are Hispanic so they're the bulk of our focus. Many on staff are bilingual and all forms we make are translated, as well as parent meeting and events.

Help with internships, job resumes, job searches

Latinx College Fair

Many of our Family Engagement workshops are presented in Spanish to ensure Hispanic families have access to college/college application process/financial aid and loans information.

Mentoring to Students to help them Access College/Career Pathways

Much of the staff and programming are bilingual for Spanish-speaking audiences.

Our organization provides a broad spectrum of services to students who are considered low-income and first generation. Most of our students are hispanic but the services are still offered to all of our other students alike. Some of these services include counseling from middle through post secondary, college readiness, academic readiness, college access, among a plethora of others.

Parent engagement / meetings to provide more information and a lot of one-on-one advising sessions

Persistence and retention efforts while in college; peer mentoring; scholarship support; access to resources on college campus; transfer advisement
Provide Spanish curriculum and counseling to Hispanic families

SAT, College Guidance, College Advising, College Success Skills, pipeline to our network and college program

Through Scholarships - Last Dollar Grant

WASFA completion support

We do not provide services to students once they are in college, only while in elementary school, middle school, and/or high school. Throughout their secondary education, our students receive academic support such as tutoring as well as social support navigating school systems and college knowledge.

We offer a scholarship to all students that we serve in our local high schools with support staff walking students from academic intervention, to graduation, to post-secondary success.

We offer a wide variety of programs regarding College Access which include test preparation, scholarship searches and application, and financial aid. We also offer services in these areas to the parents of the students we serve.

We provide most parent and student meetings in Spanish and English.

We work with low income underrepresented communities.
How do you help students identify the post-secondary institutions to which they apply and attend?

39 Responses

1- understand and plan for the college admissions
2- During their senior year, Crosby Scholars also receive one-on-one assistance with the college admission and financial aid process. The Program assists students in navigating the ever changing and challenging world of college admissions. Each school has a counselor in the Student Services (Guidance) office who serves as the Crosby Scholar liaison for that particular school.

- Ask them their preferences, match them based on academic achievement and test scores, review financial aid offers/cost of attendance.
- Based on what there interest are and plans to stay locally or move away to college etc.
- By showing the strategies to research the types and costs of college
- Campus visits, fit & match evaluation, total price, and location

College Visits, Recruiters, and College Fairs

- College fit and match workshops include financial aid award letter analyzer tool and utilizing College Scorecard to consider multiple dimensions of college fit and match
- College tours, college fairs, meeting with students one on one

Each student gets a College Transition Educational Adviser in addition to their Young Scholars Educational Adviser to assist with identifying post-secondary institutions. Most of our Young Scholars also get the College Scholarship of up to $40,000 per year for college. In addition, most of our students get online or one-on-one test prep.

- Forward college admissions office brochure materials and visit opportunities to those who've self-identified
- I am an Advisor at a specific institution, so I do not play a role in post-secondary institution selection with students. Our organization does take students on college trips, college fairs, and HS advisors work with students one-on-one to look for specific programs in our area and around the nation.

In grades 9 through 12, there are specific curriculum strategies and techniques that our teachers utilize, such as reviewing and reporting on college majors, colleges, etc.

In our Access programming, we achieve this through a mixture of college exploration, use of college matrices to compare institutions, lessons on financial aid, and conversations and mentorship around selecting the best fit school.

- Look at their financial need, academic profile, and interests - and build a tailored list based off these needs. Down 100% of the senior class.
Naviance scattergram Google search

One-one-Advising, MBA mentor, Workshops

Program knowledge based on robust financial aid data analysis and an overlay of NSC data.

Revising colleges since 10th graders Visiting Colleges Staying overnight on college campuses College Reps visits Attending College Fairs

Specifically regarding Hispanic students, we match students to institutions based upon their interest in their programs, their academic competitiveness as it relates to entrance requirements, and affordability based upon access to financial aid.

Student interest and aspiration. Match as determined by student GPA and test score. Overview of our organization's partner colleges.

Take them to college fairs, introduce them to college reps, research by college counselor - who also steers them to schools that meet 100% financial need.

Talk about their interests, likes and dislikes, preferences in a college, cost, fit

Through one on one college counseling

Understanding college fit and understanding college cost.

Use of college match resources on websites like the College Board and Naviance; introduce students to local post secondary institutions with campus supports to ensure success after enrollment.

We assist students based on the students' academic capabilities, interests, admissions requirement, social-cultural environment, school size and location.

We assist them by helping them identify the type of institution that will best serve their needs. We take a realistic approach with our students and ensure they are selecting an institution not only based on the quality of academics or the excitement of the social life, but also the opportunities and services available on campus that will ensure success of first gen college students.

We evaluate their financial aid information across direct costs, indirect costs, resources, etc. to arrive at a surplus/gap amount that lets the student know their annual expenditure regarding their time at that particular school if they decide to go. We also host recruiter visits from highly-selective private colleges so students can get a chance to ask them questions they otherwise wouldn't be able to. Additionally through the High School years, there are multiple College Tours that visit institutions that are close to each other (e.g., CPP/Mt. SAC, CSUSB/UCR).

We expose our students to as many colleges and universities as possible by taking students on college tours, including a "College of the Month" blurb on our monthly newsletters, encourage our students to participate in summer programs at universities across the nation so that they are exposed to as many different campuses as possible, and connect them with alumni from our our organization that are currently attending institutions that our students are interested in attending.
We have a college admissions team that provides individual attention to our students. They admissions team gets to know their students and the type of campus they would feel most comfortable at. They also take our students on college visits to see the campuses in person.

We have a train the trainer model, so this work is done primarily by their teachers and counselors. We provide all the necessary information to expose them to these different institutions so they know their options.

We have educational advisers who regularly communicate with our students to help advise them throughout the college process, including taking them on college tours, helping with crafting their lists, etc.

We help students understand and compare financial aid packages, strength of degree programs, and student support services.

We sit down with high school seniors and identify campuses for students based on their preferences, skills and academic profile

We start in the 11th grade and host a college prep meeting with the parent/guardian, student, and program staff to discuss reach, match and safety schools. Besides discussing academics, we make sure we touch on going away from home, financial barriers, and other barriers that the student may face. During their 12th grade year, we do a follow-up meeting. This meeting is faciltated in the summer or early fall. Again, we discussed reach, match, and safety schools and go from there.

We work alongside 17 college partners to provide full tuition, full need scholarships.

We work with students to create a individualized college plan. We provide enrichment, workshops, and college visits. We track A-G completion and expose scholars to many different college opportunities. We have an annual College Within Reach event, open to all LA County foster youth and caregivers for them to learn about college access.

college visits, college application week focus, individual advising through mentors, ACT/SAT prep, FAFSA completion help

match and fit presentations, college representative visits, college fairs, college field trips, prep for college entrance exams
How do you think the services you provide influence the institutions to which students matriculate?

41 Responses

- Students better able to navigate the college application process: 39 responses
- Students better able to navigate the financial aid process: 38 responses
- Students more open to apply to selective institutions when qualified: 30 responses
- Students more involved with extracurricular activities: 23 responses
- Students better prepared for standardized pre-college tests: 21 responses
- Students more academically qualified: 18 responses
- Other - please explain: 7 responses
Students better able to navigate the college application process

Students better able to navigate the financial aid process

Students more open to applying to selective institutions when qualified

Students more involved with extracurricular activities

Students better prepared for standardized pre-college tests

Students more academically qualified

Other

22%

22%

17%

13%

12%

10%

4%

7 Responses

Other - Text

Because we are college and career, students understand all of their options available to them (4 year, 2 year, trade school, public, private) in order to make the best informed decision for them.

Identifying best fit institutions; exposure to new institutions

Students are more aware of various aspects of the campus as they typically don't visit even the closer schools.

Students are more aware of what colleges even exist. To meet a first gen student and their knowledge level and to try to raise it requires going back to the beginning every time. Most do not know the words associates or bachelors, or what a credit is, or the multiple majors that exist. We try to make them realize there's so much more to the world of education than four core subjects and professional degree jobs.

Students have greater financial resources to pay their expected portion of the cost of attendance.

Students self-confidence, self-efficacy improve when they attend universities that are an appropriate fit.

We only work with institutions that we have agreements with. Meaning, any students we help the college selects will have access to fin aid support, academic support, socio-emotional support, etc.
Does your program advise students to apply to the most selective institution to which they are likely to be admitted?

20 Responses

- Yes: 16
- No: 4

Pie chart: 80% Yes, 20% No
Approximately how often do the students you serve matriculate to the most selective institution to which they were admitted?

37 Responses

- More than 75% of the time: 9 responses (24%)
- 50 - 75% of the time: 15 responses (41%)
- 25 - 50% of the time: 10 responses (27%)
- Less than 25% of the time: 3 responses (8%)
What concerns are most often raised by students and/or their parents, guardians, or caregivers about colleges and universities? Select all that apply.

41 Responses

- Tuition cost and other expenses: 41
- Distance from home: 36
- Navigating financial aid process: 30
- Navigating application process: 18
- Academic qualifications: 16
- Other: 3

3 Responses

Other - Text

Fit of school culture, school demographics

Parents seem to be more concerned about their students leaving home and not being able to work and assist in providing for the family after high school graduation.

These are factors named by parents through teachers because we do not directly interact with parents.
Other
Academic qualifications
Navigating the financial aid process
Navigating the application process
Distance from home
Cost of college tuition and related expenses
Have you noticed academic undermatch within your client population?

38 Responses

- Yes - Across all students: 14 responses (37%)
- Yes - Only some students: 13 responses (34%)
- No: 11 responses (29%)

13 Responses

Yes - Only with some student populations (please describe) - Text

Academic undermatch occurs most often with students who cannot close the financial aid gaps at costlier institutions that they are an academic match.

I would say sometimes.
Many middle class families have not saved money to be able to afford more selective colleges. Until this academic year in Maryland, undocumented students could not qualify for State aid to make attending four-year colleges affordable.

Many students go out of state and attend select universities, but they do a lot of it because they trust us that college isn't college and that there will be a difference between schools. Many also are too afraid to go somewhere they have never herd of or be away from family. Many parents are undocumented (students too) and this can make a student or parent or both want to stay close to home and attend a community college when they know they could do more.

N/A - I have spoken to a few counselors in the district who feel students undermatch given the Dallas County Promise initiative.

Our community college has financial assistance that makes it free to students. Many of our students start there because of the financial benefits for them.

Staff notes "imposter syndrome" among first-generation students.

Students who come to us after community college will often opt to transfer to the university that is closest to them.

The proliferation of Dallas County Promise has significantly impacted our ability to right-match students with institutions that will serve them well. This is becoming an increasingly bigger program as this program expands and sucks all the oxygen out of the room for college advising. The process is too long and too arduous and the marketing is so aggressive towards students and parents. We are seeing more and more students saying they will go to college "for free to get their basics" and opt out of applying to 4-year colleges. Even with bringing this information to the attention of Dallas County Promise administration, they refuse to work together with us to facilitate right-matching. Our persistence data is BLEAK from Cohort 1 (we are in Cohort 3), but DCP is boasting about a 35% enrollment jump. There is a noticeable shift in undermatching and a swing away from 4-year college enrollment since the beginning of DCP.

There have been students with the academic qualifications who have not been properly advised to apply to more selective institutions.

Very few of our students under match, but it's usually because of geography, cost, or fit.

We do not specifically data regarding this. However, with Hispanic/Latinx students, we do hear anecdotally that students will attend an institution closer to home due to family preference/pressure, even if the student was admitted to a selective institution.

migrant families/students
Based on your experience, what factors contribute to students experiencing academic undermatch?

27 Responses

Based on your experience, what factors contribute to students experiencing academic undermatch?

- Ability to get help academically at home,
- Confidence, Advice from their school's Dallas County Promise. Poor information about financial aid and college affordability. Aggressive marketing campaigns.
- Distance and financial aid challenges.
  - Family/societal expectations to apply to specific schools or stay close to home; students are unaware of the vast amount of institutions they can apply to; students are unaware that there are many schools that meet financial aid; parents have not attended post-secondary schools so are unable to help in application process.
- Fear and lack of info on true costs (and purchasing power of Pell)
  - Fear of taking out student loans; middle class parents status is rather recent - they have not saved money to pay for college and they do not qualify for need-based aid. Students with aspirations to attend college to major in STEM, they attend high schools that do not offer physics or calculus - which makes them ineligible for admission although they have GPAs and test scores for admission.
- Financial Aid, location
  - Financial assistance from our community college, not wanting to leave home
- Geography, cost, and fit
- Lack of exposure
  - Lack of knowledge, cost of attendance, distance from home.
- Lack of knowledge, family expectations/responsibilities, cultural match with institution
  - Late notification of merit awards, lack of opportunities to go on college tours, unfamiliarity with schools that aren't "name brand"
  - Mainly a confidence issue. Also when they get there, there's a sense of academic inequity regarding the preparation of students' peers.
  - Not having exposure to selective schools, feeling that because they are rural students they will not be taken as serious candidates, feeling like they do not have the qualifications to be admitted to selective schools, and the high cost of selective institutions
Parents and/or caregivers pressure them to stay at a community college just so they can be close to home.

Parents want students close by - nervousness about ICE

Pell Grant means no need for students to pledge to the Dallas County Promise which send them to community college free of charge. Instead of going to a 2 year they can go straight to the 4 year.

Perceptions about schools (i.e. "selective" = "white"), wanting to stay closer to home, unaware of their options or their academic match

The 2-year college in our community is seen as "free and easy" and is also the school system most of our students' friends/family members have been a part of- so it feels familiar and draws overqualified students its way with the lure of being "inexpensive."

The education they receive at their high schools when compared to more affluent school districts

They are unaware of the choices outside of where they live.

We do not track college fit and match. We work with students late in their senior year of high school and mostly focus on comparing financial aid packages and other factors to the institutions that they applied for much earlier in the year.

financial barriers and parent/guardian influence of not going away from college.

lack of belief in self, desire to stay close to family

political climate, microagressions and macroagressions from administration at the school, uncertainty about their legal status
Do you believe there is a factor or set of factors commonly observed among your Hispanic student population, specifically, that contributes to their experiencing academic undermatch? If so, what are the factors you observe?

37 Responses

Yes- Please Describe

24 Responses

A big thing we see if students wanting to stay close to home. There are not always colleges that are academic matches AND also in a students’ community.

As a Hispanic student myself I know it is hard to leave from home. Hispanic parents are scared their children are going to fail, and the only way to protect them is by making them achieve lower. Most of these students are first generation the parents are just scared of what may happen to their children.

College Promise Programs

Confidence and someone encouraging them to apply to certain schools

Culture to be close knit family, not allow girls to venture off far, misinformation that since their parents don’t have a college degree- they must start out at a community college. And pastor mus informed and tells parents Community College is way cheaper

Family expectations coupled with lack of knowledge of selective institutions, fear of high cost of tuition and being in debt, and mixed-status families who fear being deported if they share any information with institutions.

Fear of leaving home, fear of abandoning family responsibilities, fear of not being able to afford college, misunderstanding of which institutions will be affordable, misunderstanding that all colleges are equal, lack of understanding about the importance of support resources available

Finances, family commitments and fear of leaving their comfort zones.

Lack of funding for undocumented students, lack of understanding by parents of need for high grades in high school, lack of push towards 4 year institutions, workforce prioritized over college
Lack of knowledge, cost of attendance, distance from home.

Lack of school staff, tutoring and extra-curricular activities

Local campaign to push students to community colleges.

Many of our students are undocumented. They go to the community college while working so they can pay the lesser, but still substantial cost.

Misinformation on admissions statistics; lack of exposure to more diverse set of schools they may be eligible for; unclear on financial aid that is available

Most of the factors are cultural. Students don't want to leave their families. Also, the same students provide financial support and are care givers for members of their families. It some ways, they fell they cannot leave and choose to go to the campus that is closest.

N/A

Networks and access to resources

Only our top 5% of Hispanic students are offered enough aid to attend the most selective colleges. Family dynamics often discourage Hispanic students from attending college out of state.

See above.

The largest factor that we observe is the student's relationship or responsibility to family - this will often restrict how far away from home a student will go to college.

Wanting to stay close to family, wanting to feel supported at whatever institution they choose

While this is true with a lot of our immigrant families and not just our Latinx, sometimes our Latinx students undermatch to stay closer to home, especially if they are undocumented or their parents are undocumented and/or if they are the primary English speaker in their home.

institutional racism through public school beating them down to point they have no confidence in themselves, being in a state that doesn't want to recognize the barriers of pursuing higher education and therefore has created additional barriers to limit those entering into post-secondary institutions

language barrier and their need to be a monetary support for their family
Have you employed strategies to increase college completion rates for academically undermatched Hispanic students?

38 Responses

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How effective or ineffective have you found them?

14 Responses

How effective or ineffective have you found them?

Effective the earlier we work with students

Effective. Students are building their academic profile earlier in high school to feel more confident in applying to a diverse range of schools

From my vantage point, our success rate is 50/50. We seek to honor students’ aspirations and also push them to achieve the goals that we know they are capable of reaching.

Going into the classroom to work directly with students allows us to build rapport with them and also incentives the college access work we want them to focus on.

I have not been on the team long enough to say for certain if the addition of a Post-Secondary team to our organization has been effective versus ineffective.

If students and parents communicate and engage- we are successful. When students fail their first test often the students go silent. Sometimes the haven’t ever failed and give up and go home.

Not as effective, no matter how much you talk to a parent about not being scared for their child and explain all the resources they have in an institution, most of the time they would just rather not risk it.

Still analyzing the information and data.

Summer transition program - helpful
The organization has recently created a role and its sole purpose is to focus on academic undermatching and increasing applications and matriculations to selective institutions for students who are academically qualified. So far, it has proven to be effective.

Very Effective

We employ similar strategies for all of our ethnic students and have found them to be highly effective.

We have found them to be effective to the point where we have more students attending selective schools out of state.

very effective
Is there anything else you would like to include regarding academic undermatch among students, especially Hispanic students, served by your organization?

14 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A lot of our initiatives to fight undermatching are not targeted towards specific student populations but more for all of our students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness, sometimes students do not realize they are under matching themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familial concerns of leaving home and myths around students attending college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I left a few questions blank because I am not familiar with some of the various strategies utilized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of these students are targeted for technical 2 year degrees or certifications as their parents won’t say no-their education background doesn’t allow them to feel comfortable advocating for their student and just agree to whatever they are told to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The increase in racially-motivated incidents on college campuses and immigration challenges throughout the country have negatively impacted Hispanic and Caribbean students. Many students fear that they will experience a racially hostile incident while in college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They need someone to familiarize them with the process and to ensure they are making process and they complete. Motivation both internally and externally is important to the success of our Hispanic students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have a program for our &quot;Honorific&quot; students. There is programming tailored to their needs when it comes to school choice. They are also encouraged to apply for scholarships such as the Gates' and Dell scholarships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have got to stop letting organizations prey on our most vulnerable students in the name of &quot;college access.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Again, our organization does not historically track explicit data regarding this. We’d love some guidance on how to best do this in a way that is efficient and also impactful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which of the following best describe your organization? Select all that apply.

39 Responses

- Community-based nonprofit: 32 (43%)
- Youth-serving/mentoring: 15 (20%)
- Scholarship provider: 15 (20%)
- College or university: 4 (5%)
- Foundation: 3 (4%)
- Other, please describe: 2 (2%)
- State agency: 1 (1%)
- Other higher education institution: 1 (1%)
- K-12 public school district: 1 (1%)
- Research organization: 1 (1%)
- For-profit company: 0 (0%)
- K-12 charter school: 0 (0%)

The pie chart represents the distribution of the responses, with Community-based nonprofit being the most common at 43%, followed by Youth-serving/mentoring and Scholarship provider at 20% each.
Are you interested in providing more in-depth responses about the Hispanic population your program serves?

38 Responses

- No: 24 responses
- Yes: 14 responses
Appendix B
National College Access Network Member Interview Guide

My name is XX and I am part of a team of five graduate students at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration, located in Washington, DC. My team is currently completing a pro-bono (volunteer) research project for the National College Access Network (NCAN). Our current project is exploring Hispanic students’ experiences with college access and academic undermatching. As a member of NCAN, my team wanted to speak to you to learn more about academic undermatching experienced by Hispanic students. You may answer or chose to not answer any and all questions that I ask you and you can stop the interview at any point.

Consent

Before we begin, are you still comfortable with participating in this interview?

Do you have any other questions before we begin?

Interview

- Can you tell us a little bit more about your organization?
- Are there specific trends that you see as contributing to undermatching (e.g. lack of access to good information, uncertainty about financial aid, lack of preparation from high schools etc.)?
- If not addressed: What are the biggest barriers to families in navigating the college process?
- What type of specific programming does you organization do to increase college access for the youth and families you work with?
- Follow up on any specific programs that need clarification.
- Do you see any of your strategies to increase college access as more or less successful?
- Follow up: Can you say more about XX?
- What do you think is missing from the college access conversation?
- Are there ways that you think organizations could further improve college access?
- What do you believe are the best practices in increasing college access? Is there any new information and/or research that you are excited about?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Name</th>
<th>Belisa Nunez, College Crusade (RI)</th>
<th>Faith Villegas, Bridgeport Public Education Fund (CT)</th>
<th>Kensey Zimmerman, Project Grad (TN)</th>
<th>Sierra Perez, College Forward (TX)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can you tell us a little bit more about your organization and how it works with Hispanic students?</strong></td>
<td>College Crusade is a college access and completion organization. The program recruits students beginning in the 5th grade to provide college access information and academic information. This continues throughout middle school and into their college/post-secondary program.</td>
<td>MAACS, Mentoring for Academic Achievement for College or Career Success. A High School program to better prepare community students for college. Services are also provided in college if student enrolls for college assistance in particular. Organization's academic services aren't geared towards specific ethnic groups but rather more individualized to meet each student's needs. Mentors have diverse personal and academic backgrounds. (Community has largest achievement gap per capita in the country.)</td>
<td>Organization is Project Grad, a nonprofit serving high-need areas. They encourage and have private-public partnerships. Work with students in k-8 to address the importance of post secondary education before students hit high school. Additional services provided include: College access (grades 9 - 12), College success (services to students who have completed high school and who are currently enrolled in or considering enrolling in college), Career success (services to students to provide students with career skills and knowledge and connect them with a career pathway)</td>
<td>Based out of Austin, Texas, this nonprofit provides college access and success services to high school students plus students enrolled or planning to enroll in post-secondary education. This includes their mentorship program where several students volunteer on several campuses to check in on students regarding fafsa, financial aid forms, student group events, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are there specific trends that your organization believes contribute to undermatching generally (e.g. lack of access to good information, uncertainty about financial aid, lack of preparation from high schools etc.)?</strong></td>
<td>In many high schools there aren’t established college going pathways. Additionally, many students are first generation students, so their families simply do not know information about navigating the college process. For students to figure out this process on their own they must be</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge and awareness about what college attendance requires (i.e. certain forms, specific education required, language translation not provided</td>
<td>Not having enough money to finance traveling back and forth from school. Tuition to more selective schools tend to be covered by various scholarships. Living expenses is a barrier to postsecondary education overall. Imposter syndrome among students, not feeling confident in their skills to be attending a post-secondary institution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Up: If not addressed: What are the biggest barriers to families in navigating the college process?</td>
<td>Finances besides tuition, i.e. living expenses, incidentals, etc. / language barrier / cultural acclimation for first generation Americans and first generation students. Students being geographically distant from family and unable to fulfill familial responsibilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any trends your organization sees as contributing to undermatching with Hispanic students?</td>
<td>There is definitely a socioeconomic piece that contributes to undermatching. For example, if a student is submitted to a great institution, even institutions that give financial aid, but there is still a gap (even of $2,000), students will not attend. Also, students often have familial Academic undermatch are noticeable for the high achieving students. Student don’t want to leave the state, want to to stay as serve as translators for their family, students can’t afford the &quot;good&quot; match school, fear of leaving community, don’t always feel welcome at the more competitive school, start off at Community College with intent to transfer often serves as an academic undermatch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Familismo - the importance of family within Hispanic / Latino cultures. It is difficult to build such similar connections when attending a post-secondary institution. Not only do students feel a lack of support in this new environment but also face lack of representation in post-secondary institutions, with a lack of diversity among these institutions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
responsibilities. They take care of their siblings, help out around the house, or contribute to their family’s finances. This makes it hard for students to leave those responsibilities to go out of state for education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What type of specific programming does your organization provide to increase college access for the Hispanic youth and families you work with?</th>
<th>The program places advisors within partner schools (middle school, high schools, and universities) to advise and mentor students. Advisors give students one-on-one support, provide after school programs, and arrange field trips. There are also weekend and evening programs; consisting of academic readiness through workshops to help with math, SAT prep, career fairs, and a family engagement component (team focusing on involving the parents so that they are aware and can...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There's a high school and college assistant program. For college program, to enroll, student must have participated in the high school program for 2 years plus apply for the college assistance program. Student's grades and schedules are frequently analyzed along with mental health. Interventions are made with students when necessary (if student drops a class, grades drop, experiencing difficult family dynamics.) All such resources are provided both in high school and college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic Family Night (an open House provided entirely in Spanish). This event happens a week after open house, providing family members basic school information. If family is new to the country, staff provides information and typical dress code, how snow days work, what forms are required for school, nearest doctors, scholarship opportunities, etc. A Latino college and resource fair where vendors fees go to a scholarship fund for a local Latino student. Scholarships for students regardless of documentation status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing more curriculum available in both English and Spanish and having more translators at informational meetings. Organization is working to expand their mentorship program even further. Organization holds Family Nights where they encourage whole family to attend informational meetings on the college process. This event was changed to Family Night from Parents Night to include siblings and various guardians to be informed of the college process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participate in kids’ educational development). There is also a scholarship component to the program.</td>
<td>Meeting individual student’s needs, knowing that students often want to be near their familial support system. Staff thus matches students to institutions that meet both academic and familial needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there strategies your organization employs that you believe are more successful at preventing academic undermatch in Hispanic students?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program has hired an individual who has complete responsibility to seek out opportunities for students at selective institutions. The goals to this person are to: Make sure that students more informed about choices and options as related to college choice; Ensure that students can start participating in the extracurricular activities that selective institutions often require; And that students in middle tier range have opportunities to boost their profile to get in to more selective schools. All advisors are being trained to look outside of state schools for opportunities for students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring students and engaging with family regarding financial aid process. Following students through the end of college addressing college readiness, roommate challenges, health considerations, and satisfactory academic progress. While high school graduation rates among high school participants are not high, 83% of college participants graduate with a bachelor’s or a college certificate. Program has been in practice for 16 years, 534 students successfully completed program and only 31 students dropped out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff mentorship to students plus financial aid assistance. Mentoring students encourages them to be more involved in extracurriculars, engaged with their studies, prepared for standardized pre college tests, well equipped to navigate the college application process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Up: Are there any you find have been unsuccessful?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you see any of your strategies to increase college access as more or less successful?</td>
<td>There is a person in new role and launched a program called Honorific (for students at higher GPA tier). This program is hoping to better match students with schools and so far, which seems to be working well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is missing from the college access conversation?</td>
<td>There is a bigger systemic issue, at the high school level. Students get to 11th and 12th grade and are realizing they have the credits to graduate, but they don’t have classes that more selective schools require, which poses a barrier for students attending more selective schools. High schools need to better track their curriculums to align with what colleges are looking for in students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Up: Are there ways that you think organizations could further improve college access?</td>
<td>More staff who have experienced what first generation Americans and students have. Who can relate to their experiences and provide feedback from their personal background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is more success within four-year institutions where students fit better. There is also a nice robust first-generation students’ program at some schools and students are getting better assistance. One on one mentorship has provided great results in college completion. Community college graduation rates are not as high; this is in part due to “summer melt.” (phenomenon of prospective college students' motivation to attend college &quot;melting&quot; away during the summer between the end of high school and beginning of college.) They have now started summer bridge programs to address this issue.</td>
<td>Whoever is advising or mentoring student, they should be empathetic, nonjudgmental, present, and engaged. The &quot;white savior complex&quot; is an additional burden a student can carry. Staff / mentors need to be sensitive and respectful of the family culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there any additional information related to Hispanic academic undermatch and college graduation rates you’d like to provide?</td>
<td>Having an emergency fund of sorts to finance various incidentals. Pays for everything but tuition. Students do not have to pay back the money; it is a scholarship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
generation students with undocumented parents are exposed to risk of deportation when completing FAFSA. Organization curious to see if more students undermatched during this current time period due to fears of deportation or hate speech / crime against Hispanic population.
Appendix C
Student Interview Guide

Hi, my name is XX and I am part of a team of five graduate students at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration, located in Washington, D.C. My team is working on a pro-bono (volunteer) research project for the National College Access Network (NCAN). NCAN is a national nonprofit organization committed to making sure that all students, especially those who are underrepresented in postsecondary education, have the tools they need to achieve their educational goals.

Our current project explores Hispanic students’ experiences with college access and undermatching. I am hoping to talk to you today to gather some more information about your experiences with post-secondary education. Prior to being used in any publication or research, your response will be anonymized.

We anticipate this interview will take about 30 minutes, you may choose to answer or not to answer any questions, and you can let me know at any point if you would like to stop or postpone.

Consent

Before we begin, are you still comfortable with participating in this interview?

[AFFIRM STUDENT CONFIRMATION]

Do you have any other questions before we begin?

Interview questions

Experiences with education

- What is your current education level (i.e. high school graduate, some college, currently enrolled in a postsecondary program etc.)?
  - If postsecondary, what type of institution (two- or four-year)?
- How would you describe your educational experiences thus far?
  - If not addressed: What type of high school did you attend (charter, public, etc.)?
  - Follow up: I’m interested in what you said about XX. Can you say more about that?
- What type of postsecondary preparation did you receive prior to enrollment and when did it begin (e.g. afterschool programs, SAT prep classes, FAFSA workshops etc.)?
  - If not addressed: Do you remember the names of any specific programs that you participated in?
- If you participated in these programs, were they useful to you?
  - Follow up: Were there other resources that you also relied upon?
- What factors influenced whether you would pursue postsecondary education? What factors influenced which post-secondary institution you decided to attend?
- Would you say you felt encouraged to pursue postsecondary opportunities by people in your life?
  - Who?
Questions related to family

- What is the highest level of education attained by immediate family members?
  - If not answered: What is the highest education level obtained by parents and/or caregivers and siblings?
- How would you describe your experience navigating post-secondary opportunities with your family?
  - Follow up: Can you say more about XX?
- Generally speaking, what were your family’s feelings about you attending some type of postsecondary education?

Success and challenges

- In your experience, did you face barriers in obtaining access to information about options to post-secondary opportunities?
  - Follow up on any specific barriers mentioned
  - What would have been helpful in navigating barriers? (I.e. specific information, programs, etc.)
- Were there colleges or universities you wanted to apply to, but decided not to?
  - If YES: What kept you from applying?
- Do you remember which colleges and universities you applied to?
  - Can you list the schools you applied to?
  - If partial list, ask if they can provide an approximate number of schools applied to.
- Are you attending one of your top choice schools?
  - Why or why not?
  - What made it your top choice?
- Do you see any obstacles in completing your postsecondary education within 6 years?
- Do you plan on pursuing any additional education upon completion of the program you’re already in? (For example, transferring from 2 year to 4 year, pursuing Masters, etc.)

Demographic questions

(Before asking demographic questions, emphasize that answering the following questions are voluntary.)

- What is your racial and/or ethnic identity?
- Zipcode of hometown, high school.
- Household size? How many generations lived within household?
- Age
- If you feel comfortable answering, how did you view your household financial wellness / standing / stability during high school? Provide 4 answers; very low, low, medium, high, very high
Hi XX,

My name is XX and I am part of a team of graduate students at the George Washington University, located in Washington, D.C. My team is working on a pro-bono (volunteer) research project for the National College Access Network (NCAN). Through our relationship with NCAN, we were pointed towards several students, like yourself, who can provide valuable insight on your own experience with post-secondary institutions. Your insight is valuable to us as our current research project is exploring how Hispanic students experience the college application process.

I would love to speak to you to hear your story regarding any college readiness resources you have utilized, the college application process, and your college experience overall. The conversation should take about 30 minutes and can be scheduled at a day and time most convenient for you.

The conversation will be recorded and responses to the questions are completely optional as some of them will be personal in nature—relating to topics like education and race/ethnicity. Answers provided from the interviews will be used to guide the project. Any information that appears in the report will be anonymized.

I hope that you’re willing to speak with me, and should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to email me. I would be happy to provide you with any additional details regarding this project.

Thank you in advance and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

XX
## NCAN Member-Served Student Interview Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned Student Pseudonym</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Michelle</th>
<th>Gabrielle</th>
<th>Lauren</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Joanna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NCAN Member Used by Student</strong></td>
<td>College Crusade of Rhode Island</td>
<td>College Track</td>
<td>College Crusade of Rhode Island</td>
<td>College Track</td>
<td>College Track</td>
<td>College Crusade of Rhode Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q1: What is your current education level (i.e. high school graduate, some college, currently enrolled in a postsecondary program etc.)?</strong></td>
<td>Some College College Junior</td>
<td>Some College College Senior</td>
<td>Some College College Junior</td>
<td>Some College College Junior</td>
<td>Some College College Junior</td>
<td>Some College College Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q1 Follow-up: If postsecondary, what type of institution (two- or four-year)?</strong></td>
<td>4-year, public institution; Transferred from public community college</td>
<td>4-year: American University 2-year: Montgomery College (transferred to AU)</td>
<td>4-year: University of Rhode Island</td>
<td>4-year: University of Maryland College Park</td>
<td>4-year: University of Maryland College Park</td>
<td>2-year: CCRI Intends to transfer to 4-year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q2: How would you describe your educational experiences thus far?

| Went to public school. | 1) MC – quality of education was general (1 class with 200 students). She enjoyed her time because the campus was really diverse, the administrative staff really understood the students were largely non-traditional. She did international relations curriculum and worked with a professor that helped connect her with programs, conferences, etc related to her major. Felt she got the support of a four-year university at a two-year college. | High school around the east side of Rhode Island, pretty diverse, not many caucasian students. Had to take an exam to get in 313/1000 applicants got into the college. pre-college focus: MLA formatting, how to correctly write essays took AP english and AP Japanese. offered more programs than other schools in the area. | Some has been difficult, overall it has been a good experience. HS experience did prepare her a bit, but in general it’s not the same type of education because college is about self-learning. In HS there’s a lot of support, teachers are more one-on-one and there’s not the same at UoM. There is an advisor at UoM but she’s never utilized them. Major – hectic curriculum, not about putting in all the work but more the volume of content required. Hard to balance. Financial aid – huge factor. She gets financial aid that covers tuition for school-related costs but she’s struggling to stay in school because it’s hard to pay rent and. |
| More of a city kid. Went to school near Providence Rhode Island. | 2) AU – LOVES the quality of the education there. She is at AU strictly for the education, she feels she is being challenged every day. Has access to opportunities & connections given proximity to DC. How the AU school of International Relations (IR) handled transfer students wasn’t great – she felt they focused on freshman over transfer students. They asked for $60 to get information/orientation (Eagle’s Summit) about resources she would need. | Some has been difficult, overall it has been a good experience. HS experience did prepare her a bit, but in general it’s not the same type of education because college is about self-learning. In HS there’s a lot of support, teachers are more one-on-one and there’s not the same at UoM. There is an advisor at UoM but she’s never utilized them. Major – hectic curriculum, not about putting in all the work but more the volume of content required. Hard to balance. Financial aid – huge factor. She gets financial aid that covers tuition for school-related costs but she’s struggling to stay in school because it’s hard to pay rent and. |
| Had a good general education, but it could have been better. Wasn’t in the best town, but I always tried my best and did well in school. In college, nobody is there for you. You have to figure stuff out for yourself. There are times you wish your high school taught you more. When she went to college, she felt like she was surrounded by students from other places who got a better education than her. | 1) MC – quality of education was general (1 class with 200 students). She enjoyed her time because the campus was really diverse, the administrative staff really understood the students were largely non-traditional. She did international relations curriculum and worked with a professor that helped connect her with programs, conferences, etc related to her major. Felt she got the support of a four-year university at a two-year college. | Some has been difficult, overall it has been a good experience. HS experience did prepare her a bit, but in general it’s not the same type of education because college is about self-learning. In HS there’s a lot of support, teachers are more one-on-one and there’s not the same at UoM. There is an advisor at UoM but she’s never utilized them. Major – hectic curriculum, not about putting in all the work but more the volume of content required. Hard to balance. Financial aid – huge factor. She gets financial aid that covers tuition for school-related costs but she’s struggling to stay in school because it’s hard to pay rent and. | Some has been difficult, overall it has been a good experience. HS experience did prepare her a bit, but in general it’s not the same type of education because college is about self-learning. In HS there’s a lot of support, teachers are more one-on-one and there’s not the same at UoM. There is an advisor at UoM but she’s never utilized them. Major – hectic curriculum, not about putting in all the work but more the volume of content required. Hard to balance. Financial aid – huge factor. She gets financial aid that covers tuition for school-related costs but she’s struggling to stay in school because it’s hard to pay rent and. |

High school around the east side of Rhode Island, pretty diverse, not many caucasian students. Had to take an exam to get in 313/1000 applicants got into the college. pre-college focus: MLA formatting, how to correctly write essays took AP english and AP Japanese. offered more programs than other schools in the area.

Average sized school, 500 – 600 students graduating classes, was part of ib diploma program, tried getting ib program but was off a few points but did get a few college credits.

Junior and senior year difficult working all day on research projects and papers.

Some has been difficult, overall it has been a good experience. HS experience did prepare her a bit, but in general it’s not the same type of education because college is about self-learning. In HS there’s a lot of support, teachers are more one-on-one and there’s not the same at UoM. There is an advisor at UoM but she’s never utilized them. Major – hectic curriculum, not about putting in all the work but more the volume of content required. Hard to balance. Financial aid – huge factor. She gets financial aid that covers tuition for school-related costs but she’s struggling to stay in school because it’s hard to pay rent and.

In middle school I had an attitude change with my grades. I used to copy off of classmates. After I was caught, I tried to be very good at math for myself. By 6th grade I got all As and became an honors student. Stayed in honors society through high school.

Surburban school, public, ib program (college level classes equivalent to AP), general education classes.

Public school I struggled going from elementary school to middle school. I was originally in an ESL class. I struggled with math and reading. My mom put me in extracurricular activities to help with that.

In middle school I had an attitude change with my grades. I used to copy off of classmates. After I was caught, I tried to be very good at math for myself. By 6th grade I got all As and became an honors student. Stayed in honors society through high school.
But it didn’t discourage here because we were all starting at square one.

It’s weird being the one Hispanic kid in class at University of Rhode Island after going to school in a diverse, urban setting for high school.

eventually use on campus. She didn’t know where to find offices, how the university worked. Everything was figuring it out on your own. She felt things could have gone better if AU would have provided more support for orienting transfer students. RECOMMENDATION: Focus on universities providing special orientation for transfer students that is FREE.

pay for food while balancing school. Her program requires a lot of time and she doesn’t have the time to work to pay for all other expenses. She has a job this semester but hasn’t been able to go much – works 3-4 times a week at 8 hours.

RECOMMENDATION: Focus on universities providing special orientation for transfer students that is FREE.

In college, it’s not too challenging, but it’s somewhat challenging. Time management is the tough part. Two part-time jobs, I have church twice a week and I have to look after my nephew. But I’m doing well in my classes. 1st semester, I got all As and Bs. Second semester I did school. Had good relationships with teachers, stayed on task with my assignments. They’d ask me to come eat with them and some other good students to eat with them during field trips.
Q2: If not addressed: What type of high school did you attend (charter, public, etc.)?

<p>| Public school | Suburban public school in Bethesda | Public school | Public school |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3: What type of college preparation did you receive prior to enrollment and when did it begin (e.g. afterschool programs, SAT prep classes, FAFSA workshops etc.)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Her parents always talked to her about college since she was a young kid. But it really kicked off when she joined the College Crusade program of Rhode Island. This program helps students from urban areas and minority students, taking them on college trips, doing summer programs and teaching college prep things, event as a fifth grader to push you towards choosing to go to college. Starts in fifth grade with “fun activities” and goes until college. I still keep in touch with my advisor. Pre-SAT exam prep with College Crusade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined College Track Jr/Sr year of HS. Helped her enroll in SAT prep. She didn’t understand what an SAT/ACT was or why it was important. CT sent deadline reminders, computers for students to use for applying, group discussions. She found out about CT when they did outreach of some sort. Her HS was predominately white and she believes they targeted first-generation students. The CT staff knew all students well (small group of staff members that helped a lot of students). CT would bring in college admissions rep from different schools to learn about the school. Financing – she knew it would be expensive but important to go to a really good school or else she would be “stuck”. She worked starting at 16 and all her $ went into her savings account. It was hard for her to find scholarships because she was in HS full time and then working when not in school. She didn’t understand loans well until a few months ago because President of Japanese Club College Crusade of Rhode Island starting in Junior High. Saturday Program and had an advisor took 2 SAT prep classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS, attended SAT prep courses led by her school, a few Saturdays. Did College Track program – huge help with FAFSA applications, college applications – whole college application process in general, resume, letters of recommendation. In-college program with College Track. Also participated in Liberty’s Promise – program aimed to help immigrant youth get used to the way things work in the US, including college as a primary focus. Help with resume, cover letters, etc. They also brought in speakers to talk about how college is. Was connected through your HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started junior year of college prep, had projects every week / every month…for what? I think to help with college, myp program (own research) Applying to colleges junior and senior year Went frequently to counselor in addition to yearly follow ups and college fairs. Regular school counselors. Counseling for students to talk but also filled role of junior and senior guidance. Collegetracks. He was part of group to 1st enroll in group. Group was looking for students interested in more college assistance. The group would help students find scholarships from I joined College Crusades in early middle school. I found out about it searching around the school. Provided scholarships and Pell grants information. Told us about the colleges. Told us about the fees. Activities to figure out what we want to be and then determine goals to achieve that. After school and weekend programs. On the weekends, they’d usually do the programs at the school with activities and sometimes take us on field trips to see college campuses and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Either her high school or College Crusades held a workshop on figuring out FAFSA. She paid out of pocket. CT sends out monthly emails with scholarship opportunities but it is sent to all students and not all of them are relevant to each student – most don’t apply to a single student.

to LP. Found LP to be really helpful.
different organizations. These were put in a booklet and updated monthly and distributed to students. Staff here very experienced with college application process. Staff went through college without any help. Most people are volunteers. Collegetracks for high school and college. He still talks to counselor from designated organization.

Got additional scholarship help from another staff member.

hear from students at the campuses to hear their perspectives.

I would always ask my teachers about college.

Talk to people in my church. They discussed the cost of college. They helped me pick out my scheduled of classes and stay on track with my course requirements. Church: told her the first two years you do the same general studies, so cheaper to do that at a CC and then transfer to a university to pursue a degree for your career.
<p>| Q4: If you participated in these programs, were they useful to you? | Yes. However, in college, her College Crusade advisor told her that she should either drop out of the biology program, and commute from home. All because she wasn’t getting the best of grades. She thought about switching majors from biology to health studies. But then she met with one of her high school advisors and they told her “no,” she should go for it (continue in the bio major) if that’s really what she wants. | She found CT useful when she was in HS because she felt supported. She was focused on doing well in HS and not looking beyond that to the future. CT helped her learn about college, its importance, and the process. | First generation college student so had to use the College Crusade Advisor to help in the college application process. One on One guidance counsellor to talk about if they wanted to continue schooling 100% for sure helpful Parents immigrated from El Salvador and had to work her entire life, they didn’t have experience with the college system. Got a recommendation for College Crusade, connected her to other students of her own demo, had strong educational foundation. Academic help, social skill development, used group activity. Each program would be 5-6 saturdays | Very | Members very experienced with the college application process. They themselves went through college without any help. Volunteers. Keep updated on changes. Still keep in touch. | Yes. Helped me identify something that I wanted to do. Trips to the colleges were useful. We got to see it first hand. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q5: What factors influenced whether you would pursue a college education? What factors influenced which institution you decided to attend?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My parents always told me they saw potential in me and she felt like she couldn’t disappoint them. She wanted a better future life for her and kids. She wanted to thank my parents back for supporting me. It was the people around her and wanting to succeed and be a better person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being first-generation college student, she was also first to walk across stage with HS diploma. Her little sister is also in CT and watching what she does – a way to inspire her and show her what she needs to do to go to college and avoid the complications she experienced. Her parents didn’t get to have the education they wanted (dad is from El Salvador and couldn’t get education because of war, mom is from Peru in the mountains and there aren’t many schools there). She majored in IR because she relates strongly with her Latinx background and integrates that into all her college work. Her identity plays a huge role with her education and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a major in psychology and has a minor in Spanish The hours you participate in the program build up to grants that pay for school Purpose of continuing: wants to do it for her parents, they didn’t have an opportunity to get an education. Her parents didn’t want her to have the kind of work life that they took on, they hoped for her to have better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being informed about college as an option because she wasn’t born in the US (came here in 10th or 11th grade) and didn’t know anything about what it was like to go to college in US and what opportunities would be available because of college. The organizations that provided support &amp; knowledge (CT/LP) her family couldn’t provide because they didn’t know about college options. She did a lot of research because CT encouraged her to explore different schools she found interesting. She started at main campus UofM and then transferred to UofM Baltimore –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to make college decision in high school. IB program was really time consuming and not doing many extracurriculars. College tracks/prep help discover his interests of public speaking and becoming a communications major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom: I want you to have more and better than I have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister completed high school diploma Felt a drive being a first-gen student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school classes and information sessions influenced decision to pursue a college degree. Once she found stuff she enjoyed, she decided she wanted to continue to pursue it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
springboard. Great IR reputation, graduation rates, etc. It fit perfectly with her major. They have a U-pass and if you are a FT student you can use DC public transit/metro for free.

nursing wasn’t available at College Park campus. It wasn’t her first choice and if she had opportunity would have gone out-of-state but for in-state was first choice. Best option across the board.

First choice school – Uof New Hampshire and offered a lot of financial support but it didn’t cover enough expenses. She did get in. She got into most of the colleges she applied to. McDaniel College – offered her a free ride, didn’t go there because it was a small school and she wanted to attend a larger, more prestigious school. Going to UoM meant all her financial
expenses would be met.
Q6: Would you say you felt encouraged to pursue a college degree by people in your life? Who?

Her teachers were very encouraging. She didn’t notice at the time, but her teachers always told her they saw potential in her.

She thought she couldn’t disappoint her teachers because they really saw potential in her.

Also felt encouraged by advisors, from high school and from College Crusade.

Mom positive and encouraging, but she didn’t push her to go to college.

Yes, she also felt pressure because her parents wanted her to get a college education because she was born in the US and had opportunities they never did. They decided to live in Bethesda instead of SS because they knew the quality of education was much better and would provide greater opportunities. Has cousins in different countries wondering what’s going on in the US that keep asking when she’s graduating. She feels like the guinea pig of the family. Her HS friends also – her school was predominantly white and most of them were going to school without question so it encouraged her to go as well.

Had some other family members who would recommend different places to go.

Her whole family was a big encouragement, very supportive of everything she does.

Seen as the one in the family who was going to do what she needed to do.

Friends: have a strong circle of 2-3 at college who are there to support her.

Advisor: 9-11 grade Eric. still in contact with him and he’s been in her life as a strong presence.

Yes. Her mom – even though she didn’t know about the college application process she was very supportive of her going to college because of her future. HS teacher was very supportive while she filled out college applications and proof-read her essays and helped with references. College Track was very attentive of due dates, trying to get things done properly and on time.

Yes. Her teachers were very encouraging. She didn’t notice at the time, but her teachers always told her they saw potential in her.

Also felt encouraged by advisors, from high school and from College Crusade.

Mom positive and encouraging, but she didn’t push her to go to college.

Yes, she also felt pressure because her parents wanted her to get a college education because she was born in the US and had opportunities they never did. They decided to live in Bethesda instead of SS because they knew the quality of education was much better and would provide greater opportunities. Has cousins in different countries wondering what’s going on in the US that keep asking when she’s graduating. She feels like the guinea pig of the family. Her HS friends also – her school was predominantly white and most of them were going to school without question so it encouraged her to go as well.

Had some other family members who would recommend different places to go.

Her whole family was a big encouragement, very supportive of everything she does.

Seen as the one in the family who was going to do what she needed to do.

Friends: have a strong circle of 2-3 at college who are there to support her.

Advisor: 9-11 grade Eric. still in contact with him and he’s been in her life as a strong presence.

Yes. Her mom – even though she didn’t know about the college application process she was very supportive of her going to college because of her future. HS teacher was very supportive while she filled out college applications and proof-read her essays and helped with references. College Track was very attentive of due dates, trying to get things done properly and on time.

Yes.

Lots of people told her a degree is needed to have a good life / pursue want you want to do.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7: What is the highest level of education attained by immediate family members?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mom graduated from high school in her home country. No college. Dad went to college in his home country. He went to college for a couple of years here in Rhode Island. Did not graduate. She is the oldest child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister has some college (current student at MC), HS diploma. Dad: 1 year of schooling – 3rd grade level of education, equivalent to US 1st-grade education. Mom: some HS – 9th grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom- 5th grade Dad- no education, started working at age 7 Brothers- Completed High School and went directly into the work force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad: associate’s degree but from a different country. Has a cousin who dropped out of college and another cousin who is still in college. Brother is at Montgomery college and will transition the next semester. He was transferred, and got denied from UMD when he first applied and actually 3 times. And the reasoning was that person who was doing admissions up and left and his application left in the air. Mom finished high school of home country in equador Dad finished high school in america Mom took a few classes at Montgomery college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister: completed high school. Some college. Mother: Did not finish middle school. Brother: Completed high school. No college (considering potential options now)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: How would you describe your experience navigating college opportunities with your family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was a challenge talking about this stuff with her mom because she never dealt this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom questioned why she needed information like her Social Security number for applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She had resources at school and around her, but there were a lot of points where she had to figure stuff out herself and didn’t know how. And her mom wouldn’t give her information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People around her would offer to help out though.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad went to a few meetings at her HS during Sr year “BCC diversity group” focused on minority students and parents. Had monthly meetings to discuss college preparation. He relayed that information to her and helped her learn what she needed to do. Some info was repetitive with what she already knew through CT. They focused a lot on scholarships &amp; finances, questioning whether she’s considered a lot. More questions to guide her than answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents told her to look for the schools that had what she wanted to do in her life so focused on places with psychology students. They were helping look at loans/grants/scholarships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonexistent. Her family didn’t know anything about it – not because they didn’t want to help but because they didn’t know how to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying any college opps, him and brother would talk to parents and college tracks. They applied to colleges within the area. They called schools and did multiple tours. UMD UMBC. Discovered difficult to attend these schools for the 1st two years...why? Parents would go on tours with students. He had to help parents complete FAFSA. Had to find their fafsa login. Would look over his own college essays.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q9: Generally speaking, what were your family’s feelings in regard to you pursuing a college education?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely happy/ecstatic about it. They wanted it her whole life, even before she was born. She got a scholarship and her mom broke into tears, really happy she has more opportunity and doing things she has never been able to do. Dad posts a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her dad just said, do what works for you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very supportive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents pushed me towards a degree.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant to Q9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suggestive advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure I would say it was helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No structured advice or help from my parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunistic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were glad and hopeful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
on FB showing his pride in her college achievements. It's like they're watching a really intense soccer match.
**Q10: What were your primary sources of information about postsecondary opportunities?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of the information was through the College Crusade program.</td>
<td>Dad told about the college he went to in-state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She knew the “big colleges” like Harvard, Yale and Stanford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initially HS, then CT provided almost everything. Counseling office at HS because they provided information and checked up on her to make sure she was doing well in her HS courses to get into school. CT gave her information about MC initially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Her own research – online research and speaking with other students to learn how they got the scholarships they did, why they chose the schools they did, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talent development program at URI, students of minority background with ok not great GPA and some financial limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 week program the summer before college that involved coursework. Had homework. Took gender studies and comms 100 class. She did ok and made it through the program. That program helped her a lot and now covers tuition so her dad now has to pay room and board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tracking to graduate on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have access to on campus resources “academic advancement center”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Originally nervous to do it. Got assigned to 3 room dorm. First time living away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberty’s Promise &amp; College Track.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would use info given from colleges. Colleges would come visit high school. After college visits, would then talk to college track and review what’s best for him and majors. Used Google in making general searches. Collegetrack had book of all majors and further details showing what school provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College Crusade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High school Church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She did not want to be away from home, personally. She wanted to be on her own and be independent, but didn’t want to be too far because she thought she’d be homesick and not do well in school. Traveling is also a lot of money and she didn’t want to put that burden on her parents (money for plane tickets, car, etc.).

Money played a little part. But most of it was that she wanted to be close enough to home... but a good distance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11: In your experience, did you face barriers in obtaining access to information about options to postsecondary opportunities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t feel like she had any barriers to resources and information and always had the internet to search up anything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University-provided materials were hard to come by. She found out AU has lots of scholarships, jobs, opportunities that she didn’t know about until she already was a student there. They would have been really helpful. She had to do a lot herself – make calls, emails, show up at AU even before she was enrolled to find out what was available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had speakers come in from other schools Website of colleges-shows applicant information, class size, tuition, etc college crusade also included doing college tours Had to get up early on Saturday morning to catch the bus to the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really. Some of the financial aid stuff is really tricky, even if you know about it it’s hard to navigate Location Money! Mindset of leaving college without debt. Wanted to be able to go to college but then go home and do my work. Comfort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location Money! Mindset of leaving college without debt. Wanted to be able to go to college but then go home and do my work. Comfort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I knew college is very expensive. Money was a very important factor to consider coming from a middle class family. My mom did not favor going to an out-of-state college. Church said she should go for it if it’s something you really want to pursue, but it’s out of state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11 Follow-up: What would have been helpful in navigating barriers? (i.e. specific information, programs, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12: Were there colleges or universities you wanted to apply to, but decided not to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q12 Follow-up: If yes, what kept you from applying?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and didn’t want to leave home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q13: Do you remember which colleges and universities you applied to?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, Northeastern, University of Massachusetts, Columbia University, University of New Haven, Emerson</td>
<td>UMBC, GWU, UMB, American University</td>
<td>Brandeis, URI, Rhode Island College, Bridgeport, Dartmouth</td>
<td>University of NC, American University, McDaniel’s College, UoMaryland, St. Mary’s College, UofM Baltimore County, Boston University, University of Miami, Montgomery College.</td>
<td>UCLA, UF, UMBC, UMD, NYU, Towson</td>
<td>Johnson and Wales, New England Tech, Full Sail University, RIC, CCRI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13 Follow-up: Can you list the schools you applied to?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
an approximate number of schools applied to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q14: Are you attending one of your top choice schools?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really wanted to go to the University of New Haven. They offered me a scholarship, but then realized it was more expensive than she thought. When she realized how expensive college really was, University of Rhode Island became her top choice. She didn’t know what she wanted to do as a junior and senior in high school, so wanted to go to a school with a large variety of majors. Got into the Talent Development Program</td>
<td>Quality of education, proximity to home, U-pass, internship &amp; volunteer opportunities, connections, ambassadors as professors at school of International Service, highly-accomplished faculty, IR program itself was an exact match. AU school is well-known and highly respected. Yes, in her top choice. Quality of education, proximity to home, U-pass, internship &amp; volunteer opportunities, connections, ambassadors as professors at school of International Service, highly-accomplished faculty, IR program itself was an exact match. AU school is well-known and highly respected.</td>
<td>Couldn’t do regular admission, got in through the Talent Development Program Factors for top choice: It was about the money, needed it to be somewhere that the family could afford. the program, Latin American Student Association (LASA), good resources at the university Was in charge of the home after her mother passed away, her father was working so groceries, laundry, cleaning fell to her. Considered her father. Found it hard to move away and it was scary for the first part but knew that she had to move away to get her academic career going. Felt</td>
<td>One of her top choices but not top choice. Was one of top choices because of the financial aspects discussed above. Being closer to your family was important – being close but not too close. In College Park, 45 minutes away. Now living with her family because it’s closer.</td>
<td>Umd is one of top choice schools. Top choice because of classes you could take. Doing classes in photoshop, illustrator. Degree will be in bachelors degree in communications. The classes I could take within my interests. The program. B.A.</td>
<td>Yes. CCRI, and plan to transfer to Johnson and Wales People had a lot of good things to say about the staff. Said staff at RIC is not as one-on-one as they are at CCRJ &amp;W: went there on a field trip. I liked the career plans. I like the set up. I like the programs they have. Like how they talk about the programs. Like the students. Good feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q14: Why or why not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really wanted to go to the University of New Haven. They offered me a scholarship, but then realized it was more expensive than she thought. When she realized how expensive college really was, University of Rhode Island became her top choice. She didn’t know what she wanted to do as a junior and senior in high school, so wanted to go to a school with a large variety of majors. Got into the Talent Development Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
program at URI. It's an intensive summer academic program, and if you pass, you get a scholarship to attend URI.

Talent Development program at URI is for minority and low-income students.

It made adjusting to URI easier because she was surrounded by people like her.

homesick. Moved from Providence to Kingston, culturally different. about a 45 minute drive away
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q15: Do you see any obstacles in completing your postsecondary education within 6 years?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finishing all classes with a good grade is a challenge. Future classes will be a challenge because they are more advanced. But just making sure she studies and does the best she can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“we have to finish what we started” we have to do the work but she doesn’t have a lot of confidence. She’s unsure what the next assignment or exam will be. There will be many obstacles. She’s attending a PWI. Everybody has challenges based on the trauma she’s been through but she still unfinished sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only obstacle would be if took a break but wouldn’t take a break. And plans to get degree within next year as junior right now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q15: Do you plan on pursuing any additional education upon completion of the program you’re already in? (For example, transferring from 2-year to 4-year, pursuing master’s, law or medical school, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes. She wants to go to Physicians Assistant (PA) school following graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like to get a master’s degree but doesn’t know how that process works yet. Would like to get a job outside of the US in Latin America (Peruvian Diplomatic Academy) because she has family there and wouldn’t have to pay for housing. She got email from AU that she was nominated for a combined undergraduate/graduate program – could potentially do them simultaneously. Problem us undergraduate degree is a different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering a master’s upon completion of undergrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. She plans to pursue a doctorate degree – DNP (doctor of nurse practitioner).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably not. Any support he receives is still from collegetrack but is it collegeprep for undergrad. Will stick with bachelors. Didn’t want to move because wouldn’t have support system and being completely independent. Terrifying to move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer from 2-year to 4-year. Degree in graphic designs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
school, and masters would be School of Public Affairs and she’s not sure she wants to get her master’s degree within that school – none of interest.

| Q16: What is your racial and/or ethnic identity? | Hispanic/Latino Race: White | Hispanic/Latina | Hispanic/Latina | Hispanic | Hispanic /Latino | Hispanic |
| Q17: Zipcode of hometown, high school. | 28620 | 20815 | Providence, RI | 20906 | 20806 | 02909 / 02907 |
| Q18: Household size? How many generations lived within household? | 4 people for each (mom and dad) 2 generations / 3 generations | 4 people 2 generations | Parents had previous marriages before her life. Her household was grandma(mom’s size), parents, brothers, and some cousins. | 6 people 2 generations – parents/children. Extended family – uncle/aunt/cousin also living in the home. | 5 people in household. Just siblings and parents. | 3 - Mother sister and her. Brother also lived her at one point and then left country. Grandparents live nearby |
| Q19: What is your age? | 20 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 20 | 19 |
| Q20: If you feel comfortable answering, how did you view your household financial wellness / standing / stability during high school? Provide 4 answers; very low, low, medium, high, very high | Low/Medium | Not sure, her parents keep financial information under wraps. Had a sibling pass away and that affected finances. | Prior to freshman year her dad worked 2 jobs but had to drop one between low and medium: had enough for the things they needed to get by but not enough for everything they may have wanted. | Medium/Normal | Medium | Low. FAFSA said mom could not support her at all with college. |
Q21: Other comments or thoughts

She has been thinking about having alumni and past students play a role to help potential college students learn and get where they want to be. She feels having someone who has been there can help others along. She has reached out to MC to ask if she can do as an alumni to help transfer students better understand the process to a 4-year school. Students like to hear from other students. She’s on the IR Advisory Board at MC and based on her experience she decided to switch up the courses required for the curriculum. For example, requiring macro- and micro-economics at MC because it’s way cheaper to do it there than at AU (or another 4-year college). Info sessions at MC on what she did there, how she got to where she got where she is. Navigating how credits transfer – she was screwed by AU (she called the school to ask what she needed that could transfer and then they ended up not accepting some because... Being asked these type of questions is appreciated

She believes for minorities it’s harder because they don’t have the same level of support that others do. They can’t provide the same financial support that others may be able to. She believes her major requires a lot of effort (all her classmates are struggling academically, not just her), so choosing a difficult major will affect her ability to work. Some of her friends have taken the program very slow and have been deterred/stopped going to school because of the struggle and trying to balance demands of the program with all other life requirements.

Don’t shy away from a CC. They can keep costs down and the staff are friendly.

I’ve heard four-year universities are less personalized and there’s not as much communication between staff and students.
the credits didn’t match – 3 v. 4 credits even though AU was a 3 credit course. Found out at AU they waived a lot of requirements for course she already paid for and took at MC.

4-year school: better policy/transparency for major requirements waivers and credit transfers
Appendix D
Student Interview Codebook

Finances

Direct Cost of Postsecondary Education

- Cost of tuition and housing
- Grants and scholarships
- In-state tuition
- Community colleges are more affordable

Indirect Cost of Postsecondary Education

- Travel to and from school, books, supplies, and related educational expenses
- Tradeoff of spending time in class and studying versus at work earning a wage.

Applying for Financial Assistance

- Inability to complete FAFSA application due to immigration status of student and/or immediate family members
- Difficulty completing FAFSA due to the complexity of forms and/or lack of financial literacy
- Family privacy concerns sharing required information to apply for financial aid
- Student responsibility for completing financial applications (FAFSA, third-party scholarships, etc.)

Family Obligations

Direct Family Responsibilities

- Parents / family rely heavily on student for responsibilities including caregiving support, providing financial assistance, translation assistance, or other familial roles and responsibilities.

Indirect Family Responsibilities

- Strong family preference for students to live at or close to home
- Student preference for the support of having family close during their studies
- Student preference for a strong community during postsecondary studies

Exposure to Postsecondary Opportunities

First Generation Students

- Lack of familiarity with the college application process (e.g., what you need to apply, how to apply, what colleges look for in students applications)
- Lack of familiarity with the FAFSA application and process
• Students are not aware of postsecondary institution options
• Belief that all degrees are equal regardless of selectivity of the institution

**College Preparation During High School**

• What classes to take in high school to prepare for college education (e.g., taking the “correct” courses for certain programs or avoiding courses in core subjects)
• Higher level course availability
• Students attend high schools lacking necessary curriculum for more competitive postsecondary institutions
• Low academic confidence, morale when applying to more competitive institutions. Think that other students beyond their high school will be more prepared.