

4-29-2022

How Sense of Belonging Impacts Student Retention: Examining the Experience of First-Generation Latino/a/x Students Attending PWIs

Maria R. Raab
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gradprojects>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

ScholarWorks Citation

Raab, Maria R., "How Sense of Belonging Impacts Student Retention: Examining the Experience of First-Generation Latino/a/x Students Attending PWIs" (2022). *Culminating Experience Projects*. 123.
<https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gradprojects/123>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research and Creative Practice at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Culminating Experience Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

How Sense of Belonging Impacts Student Retention:
Examining the Experience of First-Generation
Latino/a/x Students Attending PWIs
by
Maria Raab
April 2022

Master's Project
Submitted to the College of Education
At Grand Valley State University
In partial fulfillment of the
Degree of Master of Education



The signature of the individual below indicates that the individual has read and approved the project of Maria Raab in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of M.Ed. in Higher Education, College Student Affairs Leadership.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Reginald Blockett', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Reginald Blockett, Project Advisor

April 29, 2022

Accepted and approved on behalf of the
M.Ed. in Higher Education Program

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karyn E. Rabourn', with horizontal lines on either side.

Looze

Karyn E. Rabourn, Graduate Program Director
April 29, 2022

Accepted and approved on behalf of the
Ed. Leadership and Counseling Dept.

Catherine Meyer-

Catherine Meyer-Looze, Unit Head
April 29, 2022

Acknowledgments

In writing this final project, I have gained support from my fellow colleagues in the 2020 CSAL cohort. My thanks go to them, as well as to many others at Grand Valley State University who have served as mentors and have provided support to me. I would last like to thank my family and close friends for their support and who have encouraged me to persist in achieving my academic goals. Without their assistance, I would not have been able to achieve this degree.

Maria Raab

Abstract

Latinx students' admission rates have increased in most recent years however, Latinx students still have the lowest degree attainment compared to other ethnic/racial groups (Rodriguez et al., 2021). Research reveals sense of belonging has an impact on retention for first-generation Latino/a/x students attending Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Latinx students gain sense of belonging through the support of their peers, faculty, and the institution's commitment to providing safe campus spaces. The primary purpose of this project is to understand the challenges first-generation Latinx students face and where institutions can provide resources like peer mentor programs to close the degree attainment gap. By having a better understanding of Latinx experiences on campus and where they gain a sense of belonging, institutions can better identify strategies to assist them better. The suggested peer mentor program can help foster a better experience for Latinx students and provide support to achieve their intended degrees.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	i
Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Problem Statement	1
Importance and Rational of Project	2
Background of the Project	4
Statement of Purpose	5
Objectives of the Project	6
Definition of Terms	6
Scope of Project	7
Chapter Two: Literature Review	8
Introduction	8
Theoretical Framework and Rationale	9
Research/Evaluation	13
Peer Support.....	14
Peer Mentor Program	15
Faculty Support.....	16
Campus Spaces: Student Organization	17
Institutional Support	18
Facing Racism/ Discrimination	19
Identity Development	20

Summary	21
Conclusion	22
Chapter 3: Project Description	23
Introduction	23
Project Components	25
Project Evaluation	28
Project Conclusions	29
Plans for Implication.....	30
Appendixes	33
Appendix A- Peer Mentor Job Description	33
Appendix B- Mentee Application	34
Appendix C-Mentor Application	35
Appendix D-Programming	36
Appendix E-Mentor Time Log	38
Appendix F-Class Schedule	39
Appendix G-Pre-Survey for Mentors	41
Appendix H-Pre-Survey for Mentees	42
Appendix I-Post Survey for Mentors	43
Appendix J-Pre-Survey for Mentees	44
References.....	45

Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

As the Latinx population continues to grow, there should be more Latinx individuals' graduating from higher education institutions, however, the reality is that the Latinx population still have the lowest numbers of degree attainment. Only 11 % of Latinx students attain a bachelor's degree in comparison to their white counterparts of which 23.7 % attain a bachelor's degree (Rodriguez, 2021). It brings into question what are some factors and barriers that are present for Latinx students and how they impact both retention and their sense of belonging in higher education

As this student population increases, it is necessary to investigate the possible cultural and social factors that contribute to lower retention and how Latinx students' sense of belonging correlates with retention and persistence. The research used will give a better context for the Latinx students' experience as well as what are necessary changes to increase Latinx students' sense of belonging at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). The support from other Latinx students positively contributes to Latinx students' retention and persistence as it increases their sense of belonging to the university. It assists in them feel that they are wanted/accepted and are important to the college community (Green & Wright, 2017). Not only does peer support impact their sense of belonging at the university, it also positively impacts their academic achievement and tendencies to persist (Green & Wright, 2017; Luciano-Wong & Crowe, 2019; Peña, 2013).

By looking at sense of belonging as a contributing factor for retention and persistence of first-generation Latinx students attending a PWI, recommendations will be made on how a peer mentor program can be designed and structured to offer students another space on campus to serve as a support system for them.

Importance and Rationale of the Project

Individuals who identify as Latinx are the second largest racial group in the U.S. and make up about 18% of its population (Rodriguez, 2021). As this demographic continues to grow, there should be more Latinx individuals in higher education. However, the reality is that Latinx still have the lowest numbers of educational achievement.

According to Simmons and Smith (2020), between 2000 and 2014 enrollment of Latinx students increased by 119%, from 1.4 million to 3.0 million. However, Latinx students completed their bachelor's degree at a of 53.6% rate compared to their white counterparts of 63.3%. It brings into question what institutions are doing once students enroll at the institution and if they are considering both cultural and social factors that impact a student's sense of belonging to campus. By better understanding the Latinx student experience, it can help recognize what unique characteristics the student population has. Institutions can establish necessary changes at various levels to increase Latinx students' degree attainment.

First-generation Latinx students have two components to their identity that influences their experiences at Predominantly White Institutions. The first being, a first-generation student. First-generation students can often have lower engagement than non-first-generation students. Transitioning to college can be an overwhelming and intimidating process (Green & Wright, 2017). Students may need additional support from different avenues than their family since their family may not be aware of important services/recourses to be successful in college. For example, how to fill out FASFA or where to go to get an internship.

Latinx first-generation students are more likely to come from low-income backgrounds, have lower GPAs, and have limited access to rigorous coursework (Vega, 2016). When coming to college, students would strongly benefit from connecting with academic and career resources

but often they may not have sufficient knowledge on how to navigate the college culture and process. First-generation students may also not have the developed study skills, tools to balancing family obligations, and work while going to school (Vega, 2016). By having a required Career Planning & Academic Success class as part of the Latinx Peer Mentor Program, this can address how they navigate the college process and ensuring they are given those recourses from day one (Appendix F).

Having positive relationships with faculty, and other institutional agents have been found to increase Latinx students' probability to succeed said institution and increase their sense of belonging (Tovar, 2015). When students can address the challenges that are impacting them with understanding staff, students will be able to receive guidance and have the needed support to adjust. For higher education professionals, it is extremely important to acknowledge the powerful role that they do have to assist students to grow in social and navigation capital (Tovar, 2015).

Depending on the student's area of study, students can often feel a disconnect and lack of support in the faculty that are instructing them. Faculty may have internal biases that doubt the student's ability to succeed. Students may face assumptions that they are not qualified in their intended major and don't have the academic ability to succeed (Sanchez-Connally, 2018). Negative academic perceptions that are common among White faculty impact a student's self-efficacy (Green & Wright, 2020). The absence of support from faculty as well mentorship, can harm students by not being connected with outside classroom resources for example meeting other faculty to serve as mentors, graduate students, or other professional opportunities (Besimon et al., 2019). By addressing the experiences of Latinx students both in the classroom and by connecting with their program or peer advisor, their experiences can be validated.

In contrast to the interactions with White faculty, Latinx students can often find more supportive mentorships with faculty who share their same racial/ethnicity background. Latinx faculty representation is significantly low at 4% compared to their white counterparts at 79% (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). By providing additional context on the importance of having diversity in the hiring practices at PWI's, it is more possible to recognize a student's sense of belonging. Institutions can also examine how more policies and programs can be built to support Latinx students by providing a space on campus. By using a Peer Mentor program with institutional agents that identify as Latinx, it can help students to start building those relationships early on in their college career. Students will also engage more in their identity development and form a social network to aid in their academic and personal achievements.

When examining racial/ethnic identity and its role on sense of belonging, additional insight can be given regarding Predominantly White Institutions and their recognition of how identity influences a student's navigation of campus space. Cultural centers began emerging on campuses after the civil rights movement to push institutions to provide spaces on campus for historically minoritized students (Von Robertson, Bravo & Chaney, 2016). Not all institutions have cultural centers. Institutions who have limited services that specifically target Latinx students can utilize the intended Latinx Peer Mentor Program. The program can give evidence on how students can utilize safe spaces, explore their ethnic/racial identity, and receive additional support for academic, personal, and career development (Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2020).

Background of the Project

Latinx college students are more likely to identify as a first-generation college student and have lower social capital compared to other students (Clayton et al., 2019; Latino et al.,

2020). They are also more likely to be less academically prepared and lack of knowledge of higher education resources (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). According to Latino et al. (2020), Latinx students have the highest percentages of being a first-generation student compared to all other racial/ethnic groups at 47.8%. By recognizing over a third of Latinx students enrolled at higher education institutions are first-generation students, it should impact at how these institutions are working to support their students on campus and considering their identity. There remains a college degree attainment gap and according to Latino et al. (2020), “Latinx first generation students are less likely to attain their bachelors’ degree within 8 years of high school graduation” (p. 443). The goal of the project is to provide resources for students, so they are given the support to achieve their degree. It is also to provide a sense of community by connecting them with other Latinx peers and faculty. By utilizing various forms of social capital, students can not only gain the tools to succeed in college, but they are also able to have space for identity development.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to identify the institutional barriers that Latinx first-generation students face as they strive to attain their bachelor’s degree. It will also examine how both identifying as Latinx and first-generation impact how students find sense of belonging at Predominantly White Institutions. By considering the experiences of Latinx first-generation students, institutions can identify the important components when creating programs. This program will address the importance of peer support and institution support, and how both are able to provide resources for students to feel more connected to campus and increase their sense of belonging. The second focus will be on their Latinx identity. By connecting them other

Latinx peers who may be facing the same challenges, students will also be able to connect with mentors and learn from their experiences.

The project will provide information and tools for higher education professionals at PWIs in developing a program to target first-generation Latinx students. To assist these students, the program will be housed under the institution's office of multicultural affairs. The Latinx Peer Mentor Program will have its own small team to meet with students participating in the program. The program will highly rely on the collaboration with other functional areas to provide events, programming, and assistance in the required two credit-course students will be enrolled in.

Objectives of the Project

The objective of the project is to help close the degree attainment gap between Latinx students and other racial/ethnic groups. The program will offer various forms of services for students participating in Latinx Peer Mentor Program to assist in navigating the college process. It will include students enrolling in a required two-credit course, connecting them with a peer mentor also identifying as Latinx, programming, and the support of their program advisors. The peer mentors will help in connecting mentees with important resources for their major. Additionally, assist them in developing study skills, time management, and linking them with faculty and outside recourses. Students can build community with other mentees as well as they will be enrolled in the same course and will attend the specific programs for participants.

Definition of Terms

Latino/a/x: The term Latino has been utilized as pan-ethnic label for the community, however, the term *Latinx* has been commonly seen to be more inclusive and to not be gender specific (Castillo-Montoya & Reyes, 2020). For the purpose of the project, I will utilize the term

Latinx. I want to recognize that there is not a consensus within the community for a pan-ethnic label and others may be more comfortable with the following terms: Latino, Latina, Latine.

First-Generation: First generation students are “students who are the first in their family to obtain a bachelor’s degree” (Vega, 2016, p. 2016). First-generation students are at a disadvantage compared to non-first students. Their parents may have limited knowledge of the college degree process and may not know of resources that are provided on campus. They may also not know how to assist their students in the transition from high school to college.

Sense of Belonging: Belonging can be defined as the belief that one is part of a particular setting or group of people (Dueñas, & Gloria, 2020). In the study conducted by Luedke (2019) the author utilized Hurtado and Carter (1997) conceptual model of sense of belonging where it defined as the feeling that one matters to others as well as having a place within a group. For this project, sense of belonging will address how Latinx students find belonging to the institution (setting) and with peers, faculty, and institutional agents. All these components can assist in validating that they do have a space at the institution.

Scope of the Project

This project will address the barriers and challenges Latinx first-generation students as they strive to find sense of belonging on campus at a predominantly white institution. By having a program established that is committed to closing the degree attainment gap, students will be able to have a space on campus that considers their identity. Student support programs can increase student’s persistence (Tovar, 2015). By an institution implementing a program, it can directly recognize the challenges students face. It will address the importance of racial/ethnic identity

through programming and conversations facilitated in the classroom. It will also address the role social capital has on increasing their sense of belonging.

The program will not address the college choice process for students enrolling in the specific institution. The program will challenge how institutions have overlooked the needs of Latinx first-generation in the past. This project can be utilized by any four-year university that is a predominantly white institution. Institutions can use it as a framework to implement a pilot program and use the findings after the first year as evidence of how these types of programs can positively impact sense of belonging and therefore, retention.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will highlight three theoretical frameworks and research that will be used to address how sense of belonging for Latinx students impact their retention and persistence at predominantly white institutions (PWI's). The community culture wealth model by Yosso (2005) addresses how different forms of capital are utilized as resources to assist students to empower themselves to achieve their educational goals. For Latinx students in higher education, the more prevalent forms of capital are social, navigational, cultural, and aspirational. Tinto's theory of student departure (1993) emphasizes students' dependency of successful integration within a college environment as well as their ability to receive support as main contributing factors to student success. The last model used is Ferdman and Gallegos's (2007) model of Latina and Latino ethnoracial orientations that examine how Latinx students develop their racial identity through both historical and cultural impacts. These three theoretical frameworks will be used to offer a different lens to understand how sense of belonging is impacted by various factors. The literature explored in this chapter will guide the development of this project and address where

there are gaps in practice to support Latinx students at PWIs. The project will rely on the literature as supporting evidence to structure a Latinx peer mentor program to address where PWIs need institutional changes to support Latinx student. The implications will address what various authors recommend for institutional change and how to address them in a Latinx peer mentor program.

Theoretical Framework and Rationale

As previously mentioned, the use of both Tinto's theory of student departure (1993), Ferdman and Gallegos's (2012) model of Latina and Latino ethnoracial orientations, and Yosso's (2005) community culture wealth model will be utilized in this project to create the objectives and evaluation of this project. By using these lenses, it will contribute to what authors have found regarding sense of belonging and retention/persistence for Latinx students and what actions to take to address this specific student population needs.

Community Culture Wealth Model

The first framework used to develop this project is Yosso's (2005) community culture wealth model. In this framework, Yosso (2005) addresses the shift from favoring White, middle-class culture as the norm and how community culture wealth is achieved by various displays of knowledge. These different forms of capital are utilized by communities of color to resist forms of oppression. The six forms of capital that Yosso uses are aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital.

Aspirational capital is defined as "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso, 2005, pg. 77). In the context of first-generation Latinx students attending predominantly white institutions, students face various barriers from discrimination in the classrooms, judgment on their abilities to succeed by peers

and faculty, and being forced to assimilate (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019; Sanchez-Connall, 2018; Von Robertson, Bravo, & Chaney, 2016). In a campus environment where support is lacking by the institution, peers, or faculty, it can be difficult for this student population to maintain hope. This student population often persist due to their sense of responsibility to be the first individual in their family to graduate and to move up in social economic status and social mobility (Vega, 2016; Romo et al., 2020; Clayton et al., 2019).

Linguistic capital refers to the intellectual and social skills that are gained through the ability to communicate in more than one language. Linguistic capital is often looked at as a barrier for Latinx students and individuals often are told to not speak their native tongue. (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015; Olcoñ et al., 2018). Latinx students face additional barriers that impact their experience in a higher education setting due to assumptions about them and the misconception that being a non-native English speaker as less capable.

The third form of capital is familial capital and how family increases a sense of community and connectedness with others. Various authors address the importance of building a sense of *familia* which is important for Latinx students to build a community and to gain support (Luedke, 2019; Rios-Ellis et al., 2015; Rodriguez & Martínez-Podolsky, 2021). Social capital is gained through using networks of people and community resources. For first-generation Latinx students, capital has found to increase GPA and retention (Tovar, 2015). Different forms of social capital are gained through connecting with their peers, faculty, and institutional agents as they can serve as mentors and assist with addressing gaps that institutions do not address (Luedke, 2019).

The fifth form of capital is navigational capital which is the development of skills to be able to maneuver through social institutions (Yosso, 2005). As mentioned before, students of

color often must address microaggressions and discrimination in different environments. Peers and faculty that experience the same barriers can connect with students on a different level and to aid students by providing additional recourses, connections with their networks, and recognizing that these issues do persist and require change (Riso-Ellis et al., 2015). The last form is resistant capital which focus on resistance to oppression and subordination that communities of color faced. Students can often feel that degree attainment may not be achievable if faculty and institutional agents do not believe or doubt their capability to succeed (Bensimon et al., 2019). Bensimon et al, (2019) and Luedke (2019) both have a call of action that faculty, both who identify as Latinx or not, to take on roles to change policies. They can also provide academic skill building, and overall support that will be inclusive of Latinx students where previous policies may be limiting degree attainment.

Tinto's Theory of Student Departure (1975,1993)

Tinto's theory of student departure focuses on how student success is dependent on a students' successful integration in a college environment (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019). This model also is used to explain how individuals from different academic and social systems are impacted by different factors and characteristics to lead them to leave an institution before degree completion (Clayton, Medina, & Wiseman, 2019). Tinto (1975,1995) argues that a student's decision to leave an institution is impacted by either academic or social factors (Burke, 2019).

The first factor is determining the institutional commitment to student retention and that an institution must establish goals to retain all students. Latinx students have lower percentages of degree attainment compared to their peers from other racial/ethnic backgrounds (Clayton, Medina & Wiseman, 2019; Rios et al., 2015). It brings into question where gaps in institutional goals and commitment are to retain this student population; as well as what are some current

practices/policies that may be negatively contributing to lack of degree attainment. Next is looking at the academic system and the impact of grade performance and intellectual development.

The social system focuses on the impact peer and faculty interactions have on social integration. In the research focusing on peer mentor program, evidence is found that social networks play a role in integration by providing academic resources from study skills, tutoring, and assisting to connect with faculty and other institutional agents (Sánchez-Connally, 2018). Building connections increase their sense of mattering, belonging, and connectiveness to campus culture. By looking at both academic and social integration on how they are connected to institutional and goal commitment, it offers an additional lens to understand what impacts retention (Burke, 2019).

Ferdman and Gallego's Model of Latina and Latino Ethnoracial Orientation

Ferdman and Gallego's (2012) model of Latina and Latino ethnoracial orientation examines how Latinos and Latinas grow to think about themselves in a racial system that impacts how Latinos view their racial, cultural, and ethnic differences (Patton et al., 2016). This model addresses three considerations when examining how Latino/a/x individuals experience race and come to develop their racial identity. The first is colorism, which those with darker skin tones are viewed as inferior. The second is how the individual views other racial/ethnic mixed Latinx heritages and lastly, imposed and/or self-imposed racial categorizations (Patton et al., 2016). By using these three considerations, Ferdman and Gallegos were able to investigate how cultural and societal influences impact racial identity development, and how Latinx students view themselves in a campus space as well as in another context.

Ferdman and Gallegos use six different orientations that are used as lenses on how Latinos view their own identity, Latinos as a community, how Whites are viewed, and how race impact's identity (Patton et al., 2016). The first orientation is *White identified* where individuals adopt a white racial identity and view other racial groups as inferior. The second is *Undifferentiated/Denial* where individuals believe that race, culture, and ethnicity do not matter, often developed from limited or no exposure to their culture. The third orientation is *Latino as Other* and how individuals do not identify at Latino due to the lack of connection to their background or heritage within the Latino community. This however does not mean that they see themselves as white but rather do not identify with a particular racial group. The next orientation is subgroup-identified where Latinos identify with a specific subgroup and may views other subgroups as inferior. The fifth stage is Latino-identified where individuals identify part of a pan-Latino identity. By having a pan-Latino identity, it makes all Latinos connected to create support. The final orientation is Latino-integrated where individuals have a greater understanding of racial constructs within a society and that their Latino identity is one part of their identity.

By examining this model, it gives another lens on how Latinx students may perceive different race-related programming as an essential or helpful student service. In creating a program, it is important to recognize that not all individuals have explored their racial/ethnic identity and that spaces may allow them to further engage in their own development

Research and Evaluation

Latinx First Generation Students

It is important for higher education professors to ask themselves, *why are Latinx students leaving an institution and why do they lower percentage of degree attainment?* According to Ross et al. (2012) as cited by Clayton et al. (2019), the National Center for Education Statistics

found that Latinxs students have lower percentages of bachelor's degree compared to non-Latino students. Latinx students' presence in higher education has increased in the past 20 years by 119% but there exists a gap in completed bachelor's degree (Simmons & Smith, 2020). It brings questions on why institutional are not able to retain this student population and if they may not be considering where students gain their sense of belonging on a campus environment. The correlation to sense of belong and retention/persistence was identified by various authors especially for first generation students (Luciano-Wong, & Crowe, 2019; Romo et al., 2020). Dueñas and Gloria (2020) found that a higher sense of belonging increased a student's sense of mattering and can assist with them as they navigate their college experience.

Peer Support

Having peers as a source of social capital and emotional support has contributed to first-generation Latinx student's sense of belonging and therefore, positively influenced their drive to persist at an institution. Saunders and Serna (2004) found that by developing a social network, it positively contributed to a higher GPA. Although this literature review doesn't focus specifically on how GPA impacts retention, it is important to recognize that it does have its own role. Luedke (2019) and Sanchez-Connally (2018) both found that by building emotional support with their peers, it contributed to academic support as students can gain assistance on course content and advice on career options. Peer support contributes to a student's self-efficacy. By gaining a better sense that degree attainment is achievable and other peers recognizing that there are barriers, it can give students a better viewpoint on campus culture.

Brazil-Cruz and Martinez (2016) addressed how building relationships impacted a student's well-being and identified it as an integral part to adjustment and transition to college life. Being a first-generation student often means not having family in the know about how the

college process works or where to seek advice on a campus setting (Rodriguez et al., 2021). By utilizing peers, students can exchange knowledge and address questions that students may have about the institution and how they can find community on a campus. First generation students may feel a disconnect to their professors or not know how to communicate with them, by using peers for direction, they can start building a larger social network (Sanchez & Connally, 2018).

Peer Mentor Programs

Peer mentor programs have different goals and objectives to address the needs of a specific student population. According to Rios-Ellis et al. (2015), mentors can give support for both academic related topics as well as personal development. By looking how mentors can assist personally, it provides room to continue to grow a relationship to address the academic needs first generation students have. Rios-Ellis et al. (2015), Simmons and Smith (2020), and Clayton et al. (2019) utilize upper classmen as mentors. By using older students, these mentors can be more reflective on what their experience was like as first-generation students and can identify where there are knowledge gaps. Clayton et al. (2019) was the only one that addresses a specific major mentoring program, but like Rios- Ellis et. al (2015) and Simmons and Smith (2020), mentees were able to build strong relationships with their mentors to go beyond major specific content. According to Simmons and Smith (2020), they found that having peer trained in coaching techniques like success strategies, it strengthened a student's sense of belong and intent to persist.

In addition to having a mentor, Clayton (2019) and Mejia and Gushue (2017) address the role of identity and having a shared racial/ethnic background as their mentor can also contribute to how students build trusting relationships. Students can feel safer to address race-related struggles. For example, situations that occurred in the classroom or were a feeling that they may

not fit in a certain career path due to seeing very few role models in a field. These findings contribute to the importance of having a mentor for a first-generation student as there are many areas to navigate during their college career. Developing a program specifically for Latinx student can build a community on a PWI and address similar experiences students have faced and acknowledge that there are needed spaces to uplift students, build self-efficacy, and build support for students to attain their intended degree.

Faculty Support

Green and Wright (2017) found that first-generations students who have the support from faculty contributes to a student's sense of belonging by knowing that faculty believe in them to succeed academically and attain their degree. The more important component with a student's satisfaction with faculty interactions was that it was a positive and meaningful interaction (Luciano-Wong & Crowe, 2019; Romo & Gutierrez-Serano, 2020). When faculty take the extra time to check-in on a student and build relationships with them, the relationship can change beyond a student to faculty relationship into a mentor/mentee relationship.

In the study conducted by Besimon et al. (2019), the authors found that faculty can help build a student's self-efficacy and can create a sense of belonging to a specific field where historically Latinx students may be overlooked. When students can have mentors in faculty, it can assist students to be more connected to those on campus as well as other network resources. First-generation Latinx students may find it difficult to navigate a specific higher education community when they do not have the social networks to make introductions with other faculty on campus, graduate students, or outside resources (Besimon et al., 2019).

Capers (2019) addressed how Latinx faculty representation impacted college rates and found that although it can have both a positive and significant benefit on students. Besimon et al.

(2019) also addressed the role of faculty who shared the same race/ethnicity as students. In this study, they acknowledge that faculty of the same cultural background can open door for Latinx students by being able to share similar barriers as individuals of color. Besimon et al. (2019) was clear however that all faculty members should take the opportunity to facilitate the success of minoritized students. Although faculty who share the same cultural background may have more context on this specific student population, the authors make it clear that it should not be the sole responsibility of Latinx faculty to reduce the biases and stereotypes of Latinx students.

Campus Spaces- Student Organizations

According to Castillo-Montoya and Reyes (2020), cultural spaces have developed in higher education institutions after the civil rights movements. Since then, culture centers can serve as a safe place for underrepresented students and can be a place to deepen their understanding of their ethnic identities as well as receive academic and personal support to connect them more to an institution (Von Roberston et al., 2016). Programming that Latinx cultural spaces provide can help form a safe environment for students and impact them to strive to do their best and allow them to thrive at a predominantly white institution (Green & Wright, 2017). In addition to having a cultural space on campus, having a Latinx student organization also assists first-generation Latinx students to navigate through college. In the study conducted by Dueñas & Gloria (2020), the authors examined how student who were involved with an organization reported to having a higher sense of belonging and mattering in comparison to those who did not. By examining the benefits of a culture-based space, higher education professionals can identify what draws students to those resources.

According to the study conducted by Luedke (2019), Latinx student organizations were found to nurture a student professionally as well as academically. By using this source of social

capital, students can gain guidance and be provided career development through learning about internships or learning how to network. Like the findings by Green and Wright (2017), Reyes (2017) found that Latinx student organizations were a place where students could have a “home away from home, and a family” (p. 460). Students utilized this space to feel that they did matter at an institution and belonged there.

Although many authors focused on Latinx based spaces on campus, Dueñas & Gloria (2020) emphasized that if students were involved with some type of student organization, students had a higher rate of sense of belonging compared to those who were not involved. By being involved, students felt less isolated. Billingsley and Hurd (2019) more specifically addressed that there was a correlation between extracurricular involvement and depressive symptoms. Similar to the findings from Dueñas and Gloria (2020), Billingsley and Hurd (2019) found that involvement could be from various type of student organizations no matter if it was a sport affiliated organization or culturally based. At a predominantly white institution, Latinx students may face feelings of “alienation and culture shock upon arriving on campus” (Reyes, 2017, p. 458). By experiencing discriminatory treatment, this can influence a students’ mental health. Billingsley and Hurd (2019) examined this relationship and found that being involved in extracurricular activities encouraged their academic success and was a source of support.

Institutional Support

Institutional support for first-generation Latinx students can stem from policies, creating initiatives through institution-based programs, and by breaking down barriers that have historically kept students at a disadvantage. According to Romo et al. (2020), student support services increase optimism for degree attainment and impact a student’s sense of belonging. First generation students often do not have the same access to information, resources, connections,

and experiences as non-first-generation student (Dueñas & Gloria, 2020). By acknowledging these barriers institutions can close those gaps by developing student support programs.

In the study conducted by Tovar (2015), student support programs and positive interactions with institutional agents lead to students having higher GPA's, finding additional support, and increasing their persistence. Like the findings by Tovar (2015), Brazil-Cruz and Martinez (2016) found that when a college or university address barriers that impact academic engagement, students have better rates of student success and transition to college. One recommendation that two articles highlighted was that institutions should consider how they can improve their structural representations by increasing diversity in higher education by increasing the hiring of Latinx staff in various administrator roles. Capers (2019) however, had a different finding in their study. Although Latinx faculty/staff representation may have some effect retention, it goes beyond that. Institutions should use various forms of culturally related curriculum and resources to increase graduation rates for Latinx students (Capers, 2019).

Facing Racism/Discrimination

Latinx students can face racialized experiences including microaggressions and feelings of othering on a campus setting (Von Robertson et al. 2016). How a student examines if they “fit it” is a determining factor for their transition to a college setting and if they perceive that the campus culture is welcoming and safe (Clayton et al. 2019). Sanchez-Connally (2018) identified that racialized experiences can stem from how peers or faculty may doubt their abilities due to their race/ethnicity. Von Robertson et al. (2016) also addressed this for example students being told to not speak Spanish and students being perceived as incompetent due to English being their second language. Green and White (2017) contribute to these findings and found that students

who felt that their campus environment was a safe place, it positively impacted them academically.

Green and Wright (2017), Billingsley and Hurd (2019) found a correlation to discrimination and lower GPAs. They however examined this relationship by adding in how student's psychological well-being was impacted as well. It is important to acknowledge that racialized experiences not only impact students academically but psychologically as well.

According to the findings by Billingsley and Hurd (2019), students who experienced racism and discrimination also had higher rates of depressive symptoms. For first generation students, the transition period is challenging to find their place and when students are facing additional barriers due to their racial/ethnic identity, students perceive the message that they do not belong.

According to Sanchez-Connally (2018), students who are encountering situations where the campus environment is not welcoming experience higher rates of isolation and lack of sense of belonging.

Identity Development

Latinx students may approach their racial/ethnic identity in various way. For example, in the study conducted by Clayton et al., (2019), the authors found that Latinx students embraced two cultural values: community and family. For them, to have a sense of belonging, it was important for them to find spaces to develop relationships, support, and remain connected to their cultural identity. Clayton et al., (2019) also found how certain university environments can assist in embracing their cultural identity in new ways. Castillo-Montoya and Reyes (2020), addressed the concept of *Latinidad* and how the Latino identity is socially constructed by political and socio-historical influences. Similar to Clayton et al., (2019), students learned from how other Latino's viewed their identity and how their own lived experiences shaped their identity. When

students are given the space to explore their identity and learn from other perspectives, students grow in cultural competence and critical consciousness (Castillo-Montoya & Reyes, 2020). An example of this is found in the study conducted by Von Robertson et al. (2016) where students acknowledged racial lumping. Students recognized that racial lumping was a form of microaggression and how it lessened the significance of one's ethnic identity.

Summary

This literature review utilized Yosso's (2005) community culture wealth model, Ferdman and Gallego's (2012) model of Latina and Latino ethnoracial orientation, and Tinto's (1975;1993) theory of student departure to examine how first-generation Latinx student's sense of belonging impact their retention at a predominantly white institution (PWI). Yosso (2015) established six forms of capital that communities of color use to resist forms of oppression. They include the following: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital. In the context of Latinx students, the authors found that social capital was built through relationships with their peers, being involved with student organizations, peer mentor programs, and positive relationships with faculty. By building these relationships, it positively impacted a student's well-being, adjustment, and transition to college life (Brazil-Cruz and Martinez, 2016). Students also were able to gain aspirational capital and navigational capital through networking with their peers to gain emotional support, exchange knowledge, and connect with others who share their same racial/ethnic identity.

Ferdman and Gallego's (2012) model provided context on how Latinx students grow to understand their own identity as well as what cultural and societal influences them as they navigate campus spaces. By examining the literature, it was evident that how students found a sense of belonging was impacted by their cultural identity. Clayton et al., (2019) found that

students were able to examine how they viewed their identity through own lived experiences and as well as learning from other's learning. Students also experienced racism, discrimination, and microaggressions due to their racial/ethnic identify. The interactions and support from their peers and faculty that could relate to their experiences helped validate their feelings of isolation disconnect. When students were able to utilize campus spaces, students not only were able to deepen their understanding of their identity but also received assistance for academics, career development, and establishing a place where they belonged.

Tinto's (1975;1993) theory of student departure was utilized to examine how student's sense of belong was found by looking at both academic and social systems that influenced student's decision to leave an institution. In the literature, the authors addressed the role of how an institution's commitment effected student retention. In the context of first generation Latinx student, Romo et al. (2020), found that student support services increase optimism for degree attainment and impact a student's sense of belonging. First-generation Latinx students can encounter barriers from not having access to the same information, not knowing where to find resources like tutoring, or not having positive interactions with institutional agents (Tovar, 2015). Students may also perceive that a campus does not want to embrace them through the message faculty or peers send through racialized experiences and microaggressions (Von Robertson et al. (2016).

Conclusion

By utilizing these three lenses to examine the experiences of Latinx students attending PWIs, it gave additional context on where institutions can build connections to students and provide support. It also identified where institutions can utilize programs as a source of outreach to students and address student concerns within a given area. By reviewing the literature, there

are various factors identified that impact how first-generation Latinx students find belonging on a campus setting and acknowledging that all these factors are interconnected. Students' experiences are impacted by not only institutional agents like faculty, but also the policies and programs that institutions support. Students are also impacted by peers, being involved with student organizations, and how they may navigate what their own identity means.

Chapter 3: Project Description

Introduction

According to Fry (2011) as cited by Rios-Ellis et al. (2015), Latinx students' admission rates have increased in the past few decades. However, Latinx students still have the lowest degree attainment compared to other ethnic/racial groups (Rodriguez et al., 2020). First-generation Latinx students often face barriers for example, lacking knowledge about the college process, feelings of displacement due to their race, and lacking access to social networks (Rodriguez et al., 2020; Sanchez-Connally, 2018; Clayton et al., 2019). Finding a support system through peers, student organizations, and peer mentor programs have been found to benefit students by building social capital and creating a connection to campus to have a better sense of belonging (Rodriguez et al., 2021; Rios- Ellis et al., 2015). Students also found that by having a peer mentor, they could ask questions about study habits and career exploration (Luedke, 2019; Sanchez-Connally, 2018). By utilizing the findings in the literature review, it was evident that peer mentor and peer mentor programs offered students another source of support and place to make connections. Students were even able to explore and deepen their thinking about their racial and ethnic identity and what it meant to them (Clayton et al., (2019).

The primary purpose of this project, based off the evidence found in the literature review, is to address the challenges first-generation Latinx students face that impact how students

develop sense of belonging. The following proposal will address strategies that will foster sense of belonging for Latinx students attending a PWI. The specific project components will include a Latinx Peer Mentor Program for first-generation Latinx students to help build various forms of capital that were mentioned by Yosso's theory of community culture wealth model. The literature found a correlation between different forms of capital and the impact it has on sense of belonging (Brazil-Cruz and Martinez, 2016). Ferdman and Gallego's (2012) model of Latina and Latino ethnoracial orientation offered additional context on how students who share the same racial/ethnic background can contribute to building a trusting relationship with their mentor and are able to relate to one another on a different level (Clayton, 2019; Mejia & Gushue, 2017). Castillo-Montoya and Reyes (2020) found that when students were given the opportunity to explore their identity students grew in their cultural competence and critical consciousness.

In addition to being part of a specific peer mentor program, students found a sense of belonging through the support of their faculty and policies/programs that specifically targeted this demographic to thrive. As previously mentioned, Tinto's theory of student departure (1975,1995) argues that a student's decision to leave an institution is impacted by either academic or social factors (Burke, 2019). By examining the role that faculty and institutional support affects sense of belonging, these findings can also be considered and where a peer mentor program is able to address them. Student support services provide resources for students to utilize during their time at an institution. Whether that is tutoring, academic success centers, or career centers, each specializes in meeting the needs of students. When institutions can specifically address the needs of a demographic, which in this case is first-generation Latinx students, students have better rates of student success and transition to college (Brazil-Cruz & Martinez, 2016). The program acknowledges that first generation students have a more difficult

time navigating the college process, being unaware of resources, or how to balance college academic expectations. It will address those challenges to help students feel a sense of belonging through various avenues and positively impact their will to persist (Dueñas & Gloria, 2020).

Furthermore, the project will utilize the three theoretical frameworks and research in the literature review to address how peers, faculty, campus spaces, institutional support, racism/discrimination, and identity development all play a role in Latinx student's sense of belonging. The following chapter will provide tools and resources that can be utilized by an institution to increase a sense of belonging and close the degree attainment gap.

Project Components

Establishing Mission & Project Goals

The initial step for this pilot program will be to establish the goals and mission of this project. As previously mentioned, the degree attainment gap between Latinx student and other racial/ethnic groups is large and compared to their white counterparts only 11 % of Latinx attain a bachelor's degree in comparison to whites which 23.7 % attain a bachelor's degree (Rodriguez et al. 2021). The primary goals are to retain students by providing a sense of community, professional development, provide a space for identity development, and provide tools to navigate college through assistance with peer mentors and enrolling in a two-credit course.

Staff

The Latinx Peer Mentor Program will employ three full-time staff members, two student employees, one graduate assistant and up to 10 student mentors. The full-time staff members and graduate assistant will work to recruit peer mentors/mentees, assist with advising students and making referrals to different departments, and serve as a support system for students. The findings by Burke (2019) examined how both academic and social integration play a role in

retention of Latinx student retention. Tovar (2015) gave additional context to the findings and how positive supportive institutional agents can increase a student's GPA and assist students to persist. The staff must be trained on how historically minoritized student population face barriers and at times, racialized experiences that can impact their sense of belonging. In addition to the full-time staff, there will be two student employees as well to assist with programming and scheduling appointments. The anticipated 10 peer mentors will be on a volunteer bases with a \$250 stipend at the end of the school year.

Latinx Peer Mentor Program Team

- Program Director (1)
- Program Advisors (2)
- Graduate Assistant (1)
- Student Employees (2)
- Peer Mentors (10)

Peer Mentors and Mentees

Mentors and Mentees will be matched based off the applications they have submitted (Appendix B &C). The program advisors will take into consideration majors and will try to match similar majors together. This will give mentees the opportunity to meet with a mentor with similar classes they will be taking, knowing their intended program department, and can bond over similar career interests. Mentees will meet with their mentor at least once month to talk about how classes are going, if they are struggling academically or personally, and to seek advice on how to connect with campus resources. Students will also be able to use their mentor for advice on how to navigate through college and how to set themselves for success.

Programming

The Latinx Peer Mentor Program will partner with other functional areas to provide additional opportunities to address the success of their students. An example is offering some programs in both English and Spanish. Using the research found by Green and Wright (2017) that Latinx cultural spaces provide a safe environment for students to thrive at a predominantly white institutions, it provides additional context on how programming for this program can assist students to receive the needed support. Appendix D provides examples of programming the office can include.

2 Credit Course

Every student who plans to be a mentee will be required to enroll in a 2-credit course that examines strategies for academic success as well as career planning. The first half of the semester will focus on study strategies and resources that students can utilize while they are attending the institution (Appendix F). In the study conducted by Simmons and Smith (2020), having peers who have been trained about success strategies helped their mentees to persist by providing the resources they may not have been aware of. By requiring mentees in the program enrolling in this course, students can receive additional guidance and connect with other mentees. Students can always ask specific questions of their mentors and provides a framework for what resources they should be aware of and to ask additional questions of their mentors on their transition to college and preparation for post-graduation.

In the study by Capers (2019), the author addressed how Latinx faculty representation can impact students' sense of belonging on a campus and are able to connect on similar background/barriers that they have gone through. Having a professor that identifies as Latinx could help facilitate conversations and provide a space for students to explore their own identity and how their experiences have shaped their identity (Clayton et al., 2019). It can also help

during two lessons that focus specifically on Latinx in higher education. Student can explore their specific career path and how to navigate spaces that have historically doubted their success to succeed for example, STEM career paths (Bensimon et al., 2019).

Project Evaluation

Surveys will be utilized to evaluate the peer mentor program to see if it assists with their sense of belonging and positively impacts their retention, surveys will be utilized. Students will complete both a pre-survey as well as a post survey to establish if the program is making a positive impact (Appendix G-J). The post survey will also be utilized to measure if the peer mentors felt that they were equipped and trained to support their mentees. In addition to the surveys, mentors will be expected to complete monthly 1:1's with one of the program advisors to track how often they are meeting with their mentees and to answer questions they may have. Mentors will also have to turn in a log time sheet every month during their 1:1's to document their interactions and what were common referrals/services that students needed (Appendix E).

Students will also use the university evaluations for courses. The evaluations will give additional information on whether the 2-credit course was effective in their goals of focusing on academic success and career exploration. The evaluation will provide an opportunity to examine the structure of the course, evaluate the professor, and if they were able to get more connected with campus resources. Surveys will also be utilized for each programming event as well. The event feedback surveys will provide data on whether the event met the student expectations, if they found it relevant/helpful, and how the information was delivered for example the effectiveness of the advisors or presenters. Surveys will also include an opportunity for students to share if they had questions that were not answered or to offer suggestions.

The Latinx Peer Mentor staff will also provide feedback based off their interactions with students and if there could be adjustments in real time. Since it is a pilot program, encouraging staff to be collaborative and to provide additional findings can help ensure that future events can better provide support to students. By using multiple forms of surveys and collecting data throughout the semester, it will provide evidence if the program structure is effective.

Project Conclusions

Having student support services that meet the needs of various student demographics have assisted students to have more optimism to complete their degree and by creating campus spaces, it has allowed them to have a better sense of belonging (Romo et al., 2020). For first-generation Latinx students, students may be unfamiliar with the college process, lacking social capital, or face feelings of othering (Sanchez-Connally, 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2020; Sanchez-Connally, 2018; Clayton et al., 2019). Latinx students have benefited by being involved with their peers through student organizations and peer mentor programs (Rodriguez et al., 2021). The research utilized to use as evidence for creating a Latinx Peer Mentor Program with a required 2-credit course provided context on what areas to include. The 2-credit course serves as an additional resource for students about the college process and to share resources, so students are aware of what different services are available on a campus setting (Rodriguez et al., 2021).

Students are also able to use the course as a source of social capital as students can connect with their peers about study habits and career exploration. By having a peer mentor who has gone through the process and are able to share their experiences, students are able to build a support system. According to Brazil-Cruz and Martinez (2016) having positive and supportive relationships with their peers is an integral part to adjustment and transition to college life. By adding the additional layer of mentees/mentors sharing the same racial/ethnic background,

students have an opportunity to continue develop an understanding of their racial/ethnic identity and the validate that their experiences are different from white students in higher education and their future career path (Clayton, 2019; Mejia & Gushue, 2017)

Plans for Implementation

The plan implementing the Latinx peer mentor program will develop from the collaboration of faculty, staff, and the support of the institution's commitment to increase degree attainment for Latinx students in higher education. The program proposal will consider the data that reflects what Latinx student graduation rates are at the institution as well as examining pre-established programs. It will be given an allotted budget that at the end of the year and will be reevaluated to see if the pilot program will continue. The budget will also be utilized for programming funds for the yearlong events for example, food or prizes provided at the events. In addition to programming, the budget will also cover the \$250 stipends for up to 10 students. The small team leading this program will also collaborate with other offices on campus to provide additional support and resources for students in the program.

Recruitment for peer mentors will be from various sources. One will be from faculty recommendations from various disciplines. Student will be recommended based off characteristics that are required for a mentor. The qualifications would be that a student must identify as a first-generation Latino/a/x student, have attended the institution for at least one academic year; demonstrate knowledge about campus and community resources; and have a cumulative GPA of 3.0. These qualifications are based of the research and model created by both Rios-Ellis et al. (2015) and Simmons and Smith (2020). Students who are interested will then have to complete an application (Appendix C) and go through an interview process to be selected.

Another method of recruitment is through connecting with campus resources like academic advising centers, student organizations, and participating in campus life night to share about the mission of the program and spread the word about the opportunity to assist students. Rios-Ellis (2015) found that as a method of incentive and appreciation for their mentors should be utilized since it is volunteer position. Having a monetary form of compensation was found to help with recruitment.

The last form of recruitment would be working with admissions and the university's software like Navigate at Grand Valley, to create a list of qualified students who self-identified as Latinx, are first generation students, were enrolled for the past 2 semesters, and have the required GPA of 3.0. Students will be contacted via email and cold calling to connect with potential candidates.

The pilot program will be targeting new first-generation Latinx students (first year and transfer students). The purpose for this is to have a smaller pool of students recruit from and support them with additional resources from day one. Since the program is only able to have 10 mentors and each mentor can serve a maximum of 5 students, this will assist to control the numbers of potential mentees. Recruitment for mentees will also utilize various platforms. One will be utilizing the events held at welcome week where staff are able to share about the program, goals, and mission. Students will be able to sign up to receive more information about the program and about the one credit required course. Additionally, during new student orientations and transfer student advising and registration, a program advisor will share resources with academic advisors to share with students so that during the registration process, students can enroll in the specific section for two credit courses. Program advisors will also share the program with the Latino/a/x student organizations as well.

The program will employ multiple full-time positions that will work with participants in the peer mentor program. The staff must understand the barriers and challenges that first generations students face at predominantly white institutions. The program director will be available to meet with mentors and mentees in the program and oversee the entire program. They will also be meeting with other higher education professionals and functional areas to address how they can help support this new program and bringing awareness about the needs and experiences of Latinx-first generation students. The program advisors will also be going to other functional areas like academic advising and admissions for assistance to recruit newly enrolled students. They will also track the attendance of participants to serve as data that the program is planning events that the participants want or need.

For assistance with the two-credit course, the team will work with different departments that have held similar classes in the past. The intended instructor will be searched for internally and externally that identify as Latinx. The goal for this is for the professor to be able to relate to students on barriers within higher education and career fields that students may face. The course will be shared with academic advisors from different centers, so they are aware of it being a requirement for students participating in the program.

The overall implementation will rely on the collaboration from various functional areas at the institution. The team will be available to meet with different offices to share the goals and rational of the program and how other offices can take part in supporting first generation Latinx students on campus.

Appendix A

Latinx Peer Mentor Program

The peer mentor program is designed to provide leadership for participants who Identify Latino/a/x to assist in supporting new students (First Year and Transfer Students) as they navigate the university and learn about how to navigate their time attending the university. In addition, the primary goals are to retain students by providing a sense of community, professional development, provide a space for identity development, and provide tools to navigate college through assistance with peer mentors and enrolling in a one credit course.

Required Qualifications:

- Self-identify as Latino/a/x
- Been enrolled at the university for at least 1 year
- Demonstrate knowledge of campus and community resources
- Cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher
- Excellent oral and written communication skills

Responsibilities

- Mentor first year undergraduate students for the entire academic year
- Refer students to appropriate university resources
- Meet with mentees 1-2 times a month (Dependent on assigned mentees)
- Provide regular written documentation of interaction with mentees
- Regularly attend Latinx Peer Advisor Events
- Connect with your supervisor at least 1 time a month throughout the academic year

Application Requirement

- Apply on our website
- Attach your resume
- Provide 2 Professional References

Deadline:

Compensation:

This program will be piloted for the year. All mentors will be thanked with a \$250 stipend.

If you have any questions about the application process; please contact one of our program advisors.

Appendix B

Mentee Application

Are you a new Latinx student (First-Year or Transfer Student) and would like to have a peer mentor? Mentors assist in supporting new students as they navigate the university. The primary goals are to retain students by providing a sense of community, professional development, provide a space for identity development, and provide tools to navigate college through assistance with peer mentors and enrolling in a one credit course.

First Name _____ Last Name _____ ID Number _____

Student Email _____ Cell Phone _____

Class Standing _____ Major _____

Please explain what you are seeking a peer mentor.

What student services are you interested?

___ Academic Support

___ Study Skills/Time Management

___ Participate in Campus Events

___ Goal Setting/Career Development

___ Belonging and Wellness

___ Financial Support

What is the best form of communication for your peer mentor to reach out to you for your initial meeting?

___ Email: _____ ___ Phone: _____

Appendix C

Mentor Application

First Name _____ Last Name _____ ID Number _____

Student Email _____ Cell Phone _____ Class Standing _____

Major _____

Do you have experience in any of the following: (Check all that apply)

- 1:1 Mentor/Coaching
- Transition Leader
- Study Skills Training
- Knowledge of Campus Resources
- Presenting Workshops
- Participate in Service Learning
- Attending Campus Events
- Member of Latinx Student Union
-

What clubs or student organizations, if any, do you belong to?

Write a brief statement on why you want to be a mentor.

What do you feel are the strengths you can bring to this program and to your mentee?

Appendix D

Programming

Event #	Topic	Detail
1	Latinx Peer Mentor Kickoff Event	This is a welcome event for mentees to meet their mentors, connect with Latinx faculty, Latinx Peer Mentor staff.
2	Service-Learning Project	The office will partner with the local non-profit organization for a service-learning project. It will provide an opportunity for students to address human and community needs.
3	Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration	The office will partner with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Alumni Office to bring in a panel that highlights the lived experiences for first-generation Latinx students.
4	FASFA Workshop	In collaboration with the Financial Aid Department, students are welcome to have their parents join them for assistance and to have their questions answered. One session will be in English and the other in Spanish.
5	Resume & Cover Letter Workshop	In collaboration with the Career Center, they will be presenting how to create a successful resume and cover letter.

6	Scholarship Workshop	Partnering with the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships, the workshop will help students to work on their scholarship essays and to give students some tips/tricks.
7	Wrap-up Event	Students will be able to connect as a whole group to enjoy a small lunch, connect with the Latinx Peer Mentor staff, and provide feedback on how the program assisted them academically, personally, professionally, and how it contributed to their sense of belonging.

Appendix E

Peer Mentor: TIME LOG

Date	<u>Time</u>	Mentee's Name	Description of Activity (Include Referrals)
Total hours		Signature: _____ Date: _____	

Appendix F

Career Planning & Academic Success

Weekly Class Schedule

Session	Topic	Assignment
1	Introduction Syllabus Learning Styles	Time Management Worksheet Create Study Plan Identify 3 Goals for the Semester
2	Guest Speaker: Academic Success Center <i>Study Strategies; First-Generation Students Barriers/Challenges</i>	Establish Semester Goals & Implementation Create Semester Calendar
3	Peer Learning Groups Review Study Plans/Strategies Establish Semester Goals & Implementation	
4	Building a Support Network Guests from Tutoring & Student Success Center;	Schedule Appointments for Success (Tutoring, Academic Advisor, Professor) Reflection #1
5	Burnout & Self Care: Preparing for Midterms Guest Speaker Counseling Center	
6	Latinx Student Development: Latinos in Higher Ed	
7	Latinx in the Workforce	Reflection #2
8	Break	
9	Career Exploration: Complete Self-Assessments <i>Pathway U</i> <i>Myers-Briggs Type Indicator</i>	Create list of 3 career interests

10	Career Research: Investigate potential employers in desired field Guest Speaker: Alumni Office	Attend Career Event
11	Resume Workshop: Career Center Presentation <i>Indeed</i> <i>Linked In</i>	Create Resume
12	Interview Strategies	Interview Assignment: Interview 3 people from career interests & reflection paper
13	Career Experiences: Guest Speakers <i>Community Service-Learning Center</i> <i>Study Abroad</i> <i>Career Center: Internships</i>	Reflection #3
14	Interview Day: Mock Interviews	
15	Class Wrap Up	Final Reflection Paper Portfolio

Appendix G

Pre-Survey for Mentors

1. Please indicate your satisfaction with campus services.

Very Unsatisfied Unsatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

2. Please indicate your satisfaction on whether the institution provides spaces to be inclusive.

Very Unsatisfied Unsatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

3. I have experienced discrimination on campus due to my racial/ethnic background?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. Latinx representation on campus is important to me.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Please indicate your level of sense of belonging to the campus environment.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Appendix H

Pre-Survey for Peer Mentees

1. Please indicate your satisfaction with interactions with campus services so far.

Very Unsatisfied Unsatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

2. Please indicate your satisfaction on whether the institution provides spaces to be inclusive.

Very Unsatisfied Unsatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

3. I have experienced discrimination on campus due to my racial/ethnic background?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. Latinx representation on campus is important to me.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Please indicate the importance of sense of belonging to the campus environment.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. In what areas do you want support from your mentor?

Study Skills Major Requirements University Recourses

Extracurricular Involvement Connecting to Campus Community

Appendix I

Post Survey for Peer Mentors

1. My mentor had the proper training to support me
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
2. In what areas did your mentor provide support to you?
Study Skills Major Requirements University Resources Extracurricular Involvement
3. What resources did your mentor share with you?
4. _____
How often were you able to meet each month?
Less than once a month 1-2 times a month more than twice a month
5. Please indicate your satisfaction with how often you met with your mentor.
Very Unsatisfied Unsatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied
6. Please indicate your satisfaction Mentor/Mentee Relationship
Very Unsatisfied Unsatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied
7. My participation in the mentorship program has positively influenced my experience.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
8. My participation in the required 2-credit program provided resources that I needed to be connected to.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
9. I would recommend the peer mentorship program to incoming students
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
10. The peer mentor program positively impacted by racial/ethnic identity.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
11. Please indicate your level of sense of belonging to the campus environment.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Appendix J

Post Survey for Peer Mentees

1. I felt I was sufficiently trained to support my mentees.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
 2. If yes, what areas?
 3. I felt comfortable in responding the needs of my mentees.
 4. Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
 5. If not, what areas did you wish you had more knowledge in.
-
6. In what areas did you provide support to your mentees?
Study Skills Major Requirements University Recourses

Extracurricular Involvement Connecting to Campus Community
 7. How often were you able to meet each month?
Less than once a month 1-2 times a month more than twice a month
 8. Please indicate your satisfaction Mentor/Mentee Relationship
Very Unsatisfied Unsatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied
 9. I established good relationships with my mentee
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
 10. My participation in the program improved my leadership skills
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

References

- Billingsley, J. T., & Hurd, N. M. (2019). Discrimination, mental health and academic performance among underrepresented college students: the role of extracurricular activities at predominantly white institutions. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, 22(2), 421–446. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-019-09484-8>
- Bensimon, E. M., Dowd, A. C., Stanton-Salazar, R., & Dávila, B. A. (2019). The role of institutional agents in providing institutional support to Latinx students in STEM. *Review of Higher Education*, 42(4), 1689–1721. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2019.0080>
- Brazil-Cruz, L., & Martinez, S. S. (2016). The importance of networking and supportive staff for Latina/o first-generation students and their families as they transition to higher education. *AMAE Journal*, 10(1), 130–158.
- Burke, A. (2019). Student retention models in higher education: A literature review. *College and University*, 94(2), 12-21.
- Castillo-Montoya, M., & Verduzco Reyes, D. (2020). Learning Latinidad: The role of a Latino cultural center service-learning course in Latino identity inquiry and sociopolitical capacity. *Journal of Latinos & Education*, 19(2), 132–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2018.1480374>
- Capers, K. J. (2019). Representation's effect on Latinx college graduation rates. *Social Science Quarterly (Wiley-Blackwell)*, 100(4), 1112–1128. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12639>
- Clayton, A. B., Medina, M. C., & Wiseman, A. M. (2019). Culture and community: Perspectives from first-year, first-generation-in-college Latino students. *Journal of Latinos & Education*, 18(2), 134–150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2017.1386101>

- Dueñas, M., & Gloria, A. M. (2020). ¡Perteneceemos y tenemos importancia aquí! Exploring sense of belonging and mattering for first-generation and continuing-generation Latinx undergraduates. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 42(1), 95–116.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986319899734>
- Green, S. L., & Wright, C. F. (2017). Retaining first generation underrepresented minority students: A struggle for higher Education. *Journal of Education Research*, 11(3), 323–338.
- Latino, C. A., Stegmann, G., Radunzel, J., Way, J. D., Sanchez, E., & Casillas, A. (2020). Reducing gaps in first-year outcomes between Hispanic first-generation college students and their peers: The role of accelerated learning and financial aid. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 22(3), 441–463.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025118768055>
- Luciano-Wong, S., & Crowe, D. (2019). Persistence and engagement among first-year Hispanic students. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 13(2), 169–183.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-12-2017-0072>
- Luedke, C. L. (2019). “Es como una Familia”: Bridging emotional support with academic and professional development through the acquisition of capital in Latinx student organizations. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 18(4), 372–388.
- Mejia, S. B., & Gushue, G. V. (2017). Latina/o college students’ perceptions of career barriers: Influence of ethnic identity, acculturation, and self-efficacy. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 95(2), 145–155. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12127>

- Olcoń, K., Pantell, M., & Sund, A. C. (2018). Recruitment and retention of Latinos in social work education: Building on students' community cultural wealth. *Journal of Social Work Education, 54*(2), 349–363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2017.1404530>
- Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J. (2016). Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Peña, C. C. (2013). Academic achievement of first-generation Mexican American males in a community college. *Journal of International Education & Leadership, 3*(1), 1–11.
- Reyes, D. V. (2017). Disparate lessons: Racial climates and identity-formation processes among Latino students. *Du Bois Review, 14*(2), 447-470.
- Rios-Ellis, B., Rascón, M., Galvez, G., Inzunza-Franco, G., Bellamy, L., & Torres, A. (2015). Creating a model of Latino peer education: Weaving cultural capital into the fabric of academic services in an urban university setting. *Education & Urban Society, 47*(1), 33–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124512468006>
- Rodriguez, S. L., Garbee, K., & Martínez-Podolsky, E. (2021). Coping with college obstacles: The complicated role of “Familia” for first-generation Mexican American college students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 20*(1), 75–90.
- Romo, L. F., Magana, D., & Gutierrez-Serrano, G. (2020). Factors influencing optimism for degree attainment in Latino first-generation college students. *AMAE Journal, 14*(3), 120–133. <https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.14.3.408>
- Sánchez-Connally, P. (2018). Latinx first generation college students : Negotiating race, gender, class, and belonging. *Race, Gender & Class, 25*(3/4), 234–251.

- Saunders, M & Serna, I. (2004). Making college happen: The college experiences of first-generation Latino students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(2), 146–163.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192703262515>
- Simmons, R., & Smith, K. S. (2020). Success central: Addressing the persistence of African-American and Latinx college students using a peer success coaching intervention. *Innovative Higher Education*, 45(5), 419–434. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-020-09516-8>
- Tovar, E. (2015). The Role of faculty, counselors, and support programs on Latino/a community college students' success and intent to persist. *Community College Review*, 43(1), 46–71.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552114553788>
- Vega, D. (2016). “Why Not Me?” College enrollment and persistence of high-achieving first-generation Latino college students. *School Psychology Forum*, 10(3), 307–320.
- Von Robertson, R., Bravo, A., & Chaney, C. (2016). Racism and the experiences of Latina/o college students at a PWI (Predominantly White Institution). *Critical Sociology (Sage Publications, Ltd.)*, 42(4/5), 715–735. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920514532664>
- Yosso, T. (2005) Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91,
DOI:10.1080/1361332052000341006