Chapter 7
Addressing Cultural Diversity and Global Competence: The Dual Language Framework

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses Hispanic college students’ matriculation at Regis University through its Dual Language Program. It covers the inception of this program through completion, describing each phase of the program, its structure, staff, and partnerships, as well as the students’ development, struggles, and successes. The research presents new data for Hispanic undergraduate and graduate students in a bilingual setting, resulting in the funneling of new bilingual culturally competent professionals in this diverse and increasingly global world. It also provides recommendations for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural and global competence is critical to the development of globally minded citizens. Within the scope of higher education, it is incumbent upon us to develop programming that transforms our students into globally competent citizens of the world and that affords diverse, often underrepresented, students the opportunity to engage in meaningful programming. Although it is true that geographical boundaries no longer separate us as they did in the past, it is simultaneously evident that recent decades have seen a surge in the Hispanic population of the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau (2006) reported that more than one out of every two people added to the nation’s population between July 2008 and July 2009 were Hispanic; that the projected Hispanic population by 2050 is 133 million, equivalent to 30%

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2145-7.ch007
of the nation’s projected population; and that the U.S. Hispanic population ranks second in the world for nation states, only surpassed by Mexico, whose population is 112 million.

The demographics of students seeking a degree have also changed. As the Hispanic population increases, so does the number of Hispanics seeking postsecondary credentials. Hispanics are now the largest minority population in college in the United States and compromise 17% of all college students. This rise is a new trend confirmed by Pew Research Center, which noted that “a record seven-in-ten (69%) Hispanic high school graduates in the class of 2012 enrolled in college that fall, two percentage points higher than the rate (67%) among their white counterparts” (Fry & Taylor, 2013, p. 4).

While Hispanics have historically been underrepresented in higher education; the data suggests that this trend is ending, requiring universities to examine (1) how to serve Hispanic students and modify strategies that encourage completion among the Hispanic population; (2) how to create institutional change that exposes all students to diverse populations and experiences; (3) how to infuse culturally relevant and meaningful programming that fosters cultural sensitivity; and (4) how to promote program that increases cultural awareness and competence in addition to our students’ abilities to interact not only internationally but also locally with the growing Hispanic population and beyond.

As a response to these population surges and to increase students’ cultural awareness and global competence, Regis University implemented an innovative model called “dual language” that creates a global mind-set with an instructional design primarily focused on increasing cultural awareness and global competence. The Dual Language Program touches a plethora of disciplines and units throughout the institution, making it a hallmark program on which to base best practices. This chapter will examine the successful comprehensive model program that has fostered a globally minded university that embraces cultural differences.

**DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS**

Although Hispanics are seeking college in greater numbers than ever before, achievement gaps remain. Indeed,

*Hispanic college students are less likely than their white counterparts to enroll in a four-year college (56% versus 72%), they are less likely to attend a selective college, less likely to be enrolled in full time, and less likely to complete a bachelor’s degree.* (Fry & Taylor, 2013, p. 5)

Completion rates echo this achievement gap. In 2000, only 10% of Hispanics aged 25–29 had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to 34% of whites and 18% of African-Americans (Llagas & Snyder, 2003).

Although Hispanics have historically been underrepresented in higher education, the data suggest that this trend is ending, requiring universities to examine how to serve Hispanic students and modify strategies that encourage completion among the Hispanic population. For the demographic data presented to culminate in improved graduation rates and long-term higher success levels for Hispanics beyond graduation in addition to creating a diverse university environment, a response to the surge in Hispanic college attendance confronted with low completion rates merits attention and responsiveness.

It is important to note that the term *Hispanic* is being used broadly here, and that within this demographic, there are varied layers of complexities including socioeconomic status and colorism. Much of