Latino Education Institute at Worcester State University

The First Twelve Years

The Worcester Working Coalition for Latino Students (WWCLS) was born in 1999 out of a sense of urgency regarding Latino educational achievement in the city of Worcester. The coalition, a grassroots group representing community and elected leaders, concerned parents, and educators, published a call to action outlining strategies to improve educational outcomes for Latino students. The creation of a university-based institute dedicated to illuminating the status of education for Latino students and taking action to improve education outcomes was a core recommended strategy. Through an agreement with Worcester State University in 2000, the Latino Education Institute (LEI) was founded with a mission to improve the educational achievement of Latino students at the K-16 levels.

The last twelve years have been full of growth and change, but our mission is still the same, and our commitment to the local community has never wavered. Fidelity to our mission includes not only what we seek to accomplish but also how we work towards this goal. The WWCLS broad coalition model is still true today as we craft solutions with colleges, schools, businesses, and families as active partners.

In our early years we worked on a continuum of fronts to positively impact educational outcomes for Latino students. We held five conferences prior to 2006 that explored the impact of policy (MCAS, No Child Left Behind) on Latino achievement. We brought forth research on student achievement and developed innovative promising practices for family and student engagement through three flagship programs. We increased awareness across the community about the issues impacting Latino student achievement and engaged the Worcester Latino community through a comprehensive media campaign and weekly TV show. With support from the Kellogg Foundation LEI worked with other commonwealth communities (Leominster, Fitchburg and Holyoke) to raise student achievement and strengthen the school to college to career pipeline for Latinos.

In 2008, the state legislature ceased direct funding to institutes housed in public higher education institutions. The LEI shifted from a grassroots, non profit model with a fiscal partnership with Worcester State University to becoming a hybrid organization with one foot grounded in the community and the other as a full center at Worcester State University. The board became a community advisory board designed to provide community leadership and accountability to the LEI; governance and administration of the LEI became part of the university system. While this was a very challenging time for everyone involved in the LEI, the shift was critical to LEI’s continued sustainability. Also in
2008, Mary Jo Marion took the helm of the LEI and continues to guide the organization today. With a renewed sense of purpose, LEI worked to sustain and grow positive relationships in the community with Latino families and students in Worcester and across the multiple departments of WSU. Innovation continued with the development of several promising practices such as Count Down to Kindergarten and the Teaching Corp Program (see Appendix 1). Providing leadership in regards to advocacy and policy impact has also continued through the Mayor’s Commission on Latino Educational Excellence, and participation in multiple community collaborations and task forces.

With this continued growth, the Community Advisory Board has also grown and stretched. This strategic planning process is a natural outgrowth of that process. Board and LEI leadership and staff were all in agreement that now was the time to reflect on the past twelve years, consider current challenges and assets and strategically plan for the future. This Strategic Plan documents that effort and reports our newly developed goals and objectives for the coming three to five years.

Strategic Planning-the process

Why Now?

The LEI is at a crossroads, our mission is even more relevant now that it was 12 years ago. Some 40% of all students in Worcester are Latino and Latino students experience the highest dropout rates.

We have tested and perfected proven programs that we know can reverse this trend. We are engaged in research and policy development needed to improve outcomes. Nevertheless, our community experiences unacceptable levels of low educational attainment.

The time is now for a strategic plan to help us work smarter. To work in a way that not only provides a model for success at the student level, but also engenders a wave of reforms and community involvement to truly impact education for all Worcester public school students. We know that raising educational outcomes is complicated problem that the nation is tackling with only measured success. The LEI must offer more than technical expertise. If change is what we seek, we need to change from within with a strategic plan that opens our organization to new ways of thinking and operating that will yield community change and empowerment.
Who We Engaged

In order to hear a broad set of perspectives; LEI engaged community members from a circle of sectors (see Appendix 2). Our 360° assessment included one to one and group interviews, both in person and on the phone, and online and in person surveys.

Additionally, we met in both small and large groups with staff, community board members and WSU leadership to gain internal input into current needs and assets and future directions and goals.

What We Learned

The assessment process helped us understand how we are perceived by our community stakeholders, and identified our unique role and value added to the whole community. It provided an opportunity to clarify our core services for continued focus:

- Research, policy and best practice models to improve Latino academic achievement and
- Family engagement to ensure local Latino students have access and support needed to achieve academic success.

Community Perspective

It is clear that there are no other like programs in the Worcester community that address the specific issue of Latino educational achievement, and that this is a serious local issue that needs to be addressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEI's perceived value in the local community.</th>
<th>Stakeholder Recommendations to increase the practical value of the LEI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unique (nothing else like it in Worcester, outreach link between parents, WPS and WSU)</td>
<td>Continue to provide the essential link between school and community through outreach and programming for Latino families, expand WPS connections (Parent Information Center, Quadrant Resource Mapping, Wraparound Model)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LEI's perceived value in the local community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Recommendations to increase the practical value of the LEI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prized</strong> (important, relevant and valuable community asset and partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner with the WPS and Worcester Education Collaborative on the Community Accountability Compact and the Mayor’s Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proactive</strong> (leader, pulling together community members to impact policy, informs and shapes strategies for success)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide more policy recommendations; inform, shape and propose strategies for success, weigh in on the budget and how it impacts Latino students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intentional</strong> (Gives voice to Latino community ex; the Mayors Commission, collaborations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convene community members to ensure their input into policy and practice; report out findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Innovative</strong> (develops effective best practice programs shared with funders, elected officials, and other programs for replication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide research on effective innovations to funders, elected officials and teaching professionals to increase use of best practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data driven</strong> (relevant data, research and resources, collaborative projects and proposal development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide ongoing up information on ‘the state of Latino educational achievement’ locally; Assist in bringing additional resources to the community through grant development and collaborative projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Parent Perspective**

LEI surveyed parents in multiple programs and asked about their personal educational goals and their educational goals for their children. For themselves, the most common goal was to learn English. Parents stressed the importance of proficiency in English in order to; navigate their environment better, improve their job performance and career prospects, get into college, and help their children do better in school. Parents shared career goals from starting their own businesses, to becoming a doctor, lawyer or engineer. Parents most common goal was for their children to attend college, followed by having a professional career (doctor, lawyer, teacher, professional), and more generally, simply to succeed in school.

One parent expressed succinctly that they want their child...“to be someone I couldn’t be.”
As seen in the triangle below, the challenges parents face in working on their educational goals are multi-layered and intertwined.

There was a real sense of isolation in the voices of parents and students when it came to what was currently helping them achieve their educational goals.

Program participants; young and old, report that LEI provides an important bridge and key support their for educational achievement.
Student Perspective

Where are Latino students getting support for their educational goals and achievements? They report receiving the most support from family members, parents, husband, wife, and extended family. Schools, teachers and guidance counselors were listed, but less frequently. Students report feeling alone as they work through the complex maze of the educational system. While family members truly want to support them, they aren’t comfortable with the language, don’t understand how to navigate the system and often aren’t able to provide the practical guidance needed. LEI is able provide that culturally responsive support through educational programs for students and parents, but the need is greater and wider than LEI’s capacity and reach. Parents and students identified the need for financial aid to go to college or continued study as an adult as well as information on where programs are, how to access programs, and how to navigate the college entrance or career development process. Access to ESL courses, tutoring and opportunities to practice English were also mentioned frequently, as proficiency in English is a core skill needed by parents to support themselves and their children throughout the developmental process.

Students and parents need support across the continuum from early childhood through college and career. LEI has developed innovative programs across the continuum but needs to thoughtfully develop a way to support replication of their innovations to extend capacity to all Latino families in Worcester who might benefit. Building collaborations across the community to expand effective programs and strategies and building communications and marketing practices to support best practice sharing will help extend the reach of LEI’s successful programs.
In a staff retreat, LEI staff completed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis. In a SWOT, strengths and weaknesses are assessed with a lens that looks internally at organization functioning. Opportunities and threats are assessed in the larger community context, or externally. (Appendix 3 is a list of LEI Community Advisory Board Members and Staff)

**Staff Perspective**

Staff identified specific opportunities particularly in the renewed focus on early college awareness and improving college access and retention as part of a national push for
education reform. The ‘pipeline’ concept; starting in early childhood all the way through to successful engagement in college or career is strongly aligned with LEI’s mission and creates opportunities for building strong and lasting partnerships. Staff recommend that LEI work to develop signature policy initiatives to help with the above threats and the overall need for better visibility and greater understanding of what the LEI does. In concert with this policy work; stamping LEI’s brand on effective models and programs will also help to increase LEI’s visibility

Staff Dreams for LEI’s Future

LEI can be a hub of information on Latino educational success, research and program implementation.
Reaffirming the Mission-Strategic Goals and Objectives

Latino Education Institute’s Mission

We re-affirm our mission to;
“Improve the academic achievement and well-being of Latino students (grades K-16) and their families.”

In order to increase learning and well being for the advancement of Latino families, the Latino Education Institute provides the following three core components

| Outcomes based culturally and developmentally responsive programs in education, literacy and civic engagement | Research how to positively impact Latino academic achievement Promote effective programs, policies and systems | Coordination of community outreach; parent engagement, academic success and college access |

Across the continuum

Birth Early Childhood Elementary Middle High School College/Career

Strategic Direction-goals and objectives

Strategic Goal One: Communication
The Latino Education Institute will provide up to date and relevant information from their core components (culturally and developmentally responsive programs, research and policy impact and community and family engagement) to the public and key stakeholders through the development and implementation of a marketing and communications plan.

Objectives
1) LEI identifies a suite of core products; (a monthly newsletter, case statements and policy briefings, program highlights and achievements, social media presence) and creates a yearly implementation and resource plan
2) LEI/WSU develop clear branding for the Institute to be used on all LEI products and programs
3) LEI provides up to date, useful information to stakeholders, including program outcomes, research and best practices in family engagement across the continuum.
Strategic Goal Two: Family Engagement
The LEI will document existing and gradually expand best practice programs in Family Engagement across the developmental continuum.

Objectives:
1) Develop a implementation and resource plan to support family engagement
2) Identify best practice programs that encourage/impact family engagement across the developmental continuum
3) Develop a process and structure for ongoing measurement of program outcomes over time
4) Offer training for providers (train the trainer) on our successful culturally responsive program models and intentionally align and link to WSU opportunities and programs
5) Engage families on key issues to Latino families, provide information, resources and opportunities for input and policy development (a good example is the in state tuition issue)

Strategic Goal Three: Research
The LEI aims to effect change through expanding the body of knowledge on the Commonwealth’s growing Latino population by developing our research capacity.

Objectives:
1) Create links among scholars, policy experts, public officials and community advocates.
2) Illuminate condition and solve problems that affect Latinos
3) Advance Latino intellectual presence in Worcester;
4) Increase the availability of policy relevant Latino focused research with an emphasis on education.

Strategic Goal Four: Integration/ Alignment with Worcester State University
LEI is clearly and intentionally integrated and aligned with WSU through multiple departments and across academic disciplines.

Objective:
1) Identify the places where LEI’s cultural lens can improve WSU’s practices and through this cultural lens;
   a. Identify both through LEI programs and research, best practices in advising students; share with other advisor groups
   b. Identify both through LEI programs and research, best practices in recruitment and supporting admissions at LEI; share with other recruiters
   c. Identify both through LEI programs and research, best practices for retention and share them across the student support network at WSU
Next Steps- Moving to Action

Develop a Strategic Resource and Action Plan with the CAB
Identify sub committees;
- Finance and sustainability strategy
- Community collaborations/partnerships
- Research and policy development

Develop a dissemination plan for sharing the results of this strategic planning process with key stakeholders;
- link to communication and marketing strategies
- develop key new partners list and elevator speech for each
- develop action plan with lead board members assigned new members for outreach

Develop monitoring and evaluation plan to measure success in implementing the strategies outlined in this strategic plan.
# Appendix 1: Latino Education Institute Signature Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LEI Programs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Summary</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Our Core Programs</strong></td>
<td>ISLA is an academic after school program for third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. This program focuses on the development and enhancement of early English literacy and mathematics skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative Services for Latino Achievers (ISLA)</td>
<td>LASOS engages sixth grade Latina girls and their mothers in a resiliency building program focusing on self-exploration, personal development, cultural enrichment, early college awareness and career exploration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina Achievers in Search Of Success (LASOS)</td>
<td>One Circle is an arts and leadership program in partnership with Community Builders at Plumley Village and the Worcester Youth Center designed to strengthen adolescents girls based on the nationally renowned Girls One Circle Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The One Circle Program for Girls (One Circle)</td>
<td>LIDER is a college preparatory program engaging middle and high school students and parents with year round activities that increase access to higher education and enrollment in post-secondary education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos Involved in Discovering Educational Resources (LIDER)</td>
<td>TCP is a paid internship program that improves college graduation rates and work readiness among Latino and other under-represented students at WSU and increases the number of students considering a career in education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The WSU Teaching Corps Program (TCP)</td>
<td>Club E develops English language proficiency through ESL classes and enrichment opportunities for adult English language learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Educación (Club E)</td>
<td>ENLACE inspires and transforms boys to scholars through life skills, personal development, educational and cultural enrichment, career exploration, early college awareness, and knowledge of fundamentals of sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging Latinos to Achieve Excellence (ENLACE)</td>
<td>In Our Own Voices combines elements of literature, theatre and dance to engage students in grades 3-6 in connecting to their own cultural identity and increasing literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Our Own Voices/En Nuestra Voces</td>
<td>Two programs (ISLA and LIDER) offer a summer camp with an educational focus serving students in grades 3-12. These camps improve academic skills and increase access to higher education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Educational Initiatives</strong></th>
<th><strong>Summary</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Academies</td>
<td>Family Academies are intensive mini-conferences typically held on weekends that bring participants together for self-development opportunities, where they learn about health, education and civic engagement. These academies serve the entire family and offer participants an opportunity to engage, network and build a community of support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Latino Family College Fair/ Destino Universidad</td>
<td>Destino Universidad is a college fair in collaboration with the College Board, Worcester Public School and Worcester State University featuring Latino college students speaking about their path to college and presentations by experts concerning financial aid, advanced placement courses, college access and preparation for middle school and high school students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countdown to Kindergarten</td>
<td>This program engages families, educators and the community in a citywide effort to enhance early learning opportunities and to support the transition into kindergarten.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: List of Community Stakeholders Engaged in Assessment

List of organizations participating in the Community Survey:

- All Saints Church
- Anna Maria College
- Belmont A.M.E. Zion Church
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/Metrowest
- Boys & Girls Club Worcester
- Central MA Workforce Investment Board
- Centro Las Americas
- College of the Holy Cross
- Department of Youth Services
- Edward Street Child Services
- First Assembly
- Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts
- Main South CDC
- Marie Anne Center
- Massachusetts College of Pharmacy
- School of Nursing
- Quinsigamond Community College
- Rainbow Child Development
- Salvation Army
- Seventh-day Adventist Church
- The Salvation Army
- Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester
- United Way of Central MA
- Willis Center
- Worcester Community Action Council
- Worcester Friends Meeting
- Worcester Public Schools
- Worcester School Committee
- Worcester State University
- Worcester Youth Center
- YWCA Central MA

List of Community Stakeholders participating in 1:1/Small group interviews:

- Greater Worcester Community Foundation
- United Way of Central MA
- Daniels Foundation
- Worcester School Committee Members (4)
- MA State Senator (1)
- Central MA Workforce Development Board
- Worcester Public School Administration (4)
- Worcester Education Collaborative
- Worcester State University (4)

Survey Respondents:

Worcester Public School Child Study Department

Respondents included:
- 17 Elementary
- 11 Middle
- 16 High School Adjustment Counselors
- 10 School Psychologists
- 1 PBIS External Coach
Parent Survey:
30 parents, most with more than one student in the WPS answered the survey. The majority of the students in the families survey clustered between age 8 and 17 with the highest # in the sixth grade.

Student Survey
104 students
- Ages 10-13 = 25
- Ages 14-17 = 28
- Ages 18-24 = 4
- Ages 25-40 = 29
- Ages 41 and above = 18

Club E Survey
We heard from 56 Club E students. Students range in age from 20 to 70 years old; most are between 26 and 50 years old. 17% have a child in the WPS, 7% have more than one. ¾ don’t have a child in the WPS. Of those parents with WPS students, the majority of their children are between 8 and 13.
Appendix 3: List of CAB members and Staff

Latino Education Institute Community Advisory Board
FY 2012 - 2013

Chair, Miguel A. Lopez, 2009-2012, Sergeant, Worcester Police Department

Co-chair, Gladys Rodriguez Parker, 2000-2006 * 2009-2012, Constituent Services Director, Congressman
James P. McGovern's Office

Mr. Barry Maloney, 2012, President, Worcester State University

Pamela Boisvert, 2002-2012, Vice President, Colleges of the Worcester Consortium

Dr. Ramon Borges-Mendez, 2012, Associate Professor, Community Development & Planning, Clark University

Dr. Gail Carberry, 2012, President, Quinsigamond Community College

Dr. Rosa Carrasquillo, 2004-2007 * 2009-2012, Assistant Professor, Caribbean/Latin American History, College of the Holy Cross

Senator Harriette Chandler*

Kirshner Donis, 2005-2012, Assistant Director, International & ALANA Admissions, Worcester State College

Francisco Escobar, 2009-2012, Deacon, St. Paul's Cathedral

Guillermina Elissondo, 2012, Associate Professor, World Languages, Worcester State University

Juan Gomez, 2009-2012, Executive Director, Centro Las Americas

Congressman James P. McGovern*

John Monfredo – Worcester School Committee Member

State Senator Mike Moore*

Massachusetts State Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray*

Leopoldo Negrón-Cruz, 2005-2012, Coordinator HIV Counseling & Test. Program, Great Brook Valley Health Center
Dr. Sergio Paez, 2009-2012, Manager of English Language Learners and Supplemental Support Services, Worcester Public Schools

Dr. Sarai Rivera, 2009-2012, City Councilor, Worcester Fourth District

John Rodriguez, 2002-2012, Guidance Counselor, Worcester Public Schools

Mario Silva-Rosa, 2004-2012, Director of Admissions, Assumption College

Kathleen Toomey, 2002-2012, Worcester City Councilor

Dr. William White, 2006-2012, Associate Vice-President for Continuing Education and Outreach and Dean of Graduate Studies, Worcester State College

Alex Zequeira, 2012, President, Nativity School of Worcester

* Honorary Members
Latino Education Institute Staff List FY2012-2013

LEI Leadership Team
- Mary Jo Marion, Executive Director
- Hilda Ramirez, Assistant Director of Public Policy and Program Incubation
- Kathleen Orengo, Administrative Assistant

Latinos Involved in Discovering Educational Resources – LIDER (College Access)
- Christina Foley, College Access Coordinator
- Eunice Ihebom, Academic Assistant

Encouraging Latinos to Achieve Excellence – ENLACE (Early College Awareness for Boys)
- Miguel Almestica, Coordinator
- Elliot Rivera, Program Assistant
- Ademi Mirabal, Program Assistant

Latinas in Search Of Success – LASOS (Self-Esteem Building for Girls)
- Kathleen Orengo, Coordinator & Facilitator
- Katherine Esparza, Program Assistant: Student
- Vianna Mercedes, Academic Assistant: Student
- Asia Simpson, Volunteer

One Circle – (Arts & Leadership Program for Girls)
- Isabel Muniz, Coordinator & Facilitator
- JoAnnie Orengo, Program Assistant

Innovative Services for Latino Adolescents – ISLA (After School Enrichment)
- Tammy Martin, Coordinator
- Roberta Mayo, Teacher
- Jasira Delarosa, Academic Assistant
- Bremner Smith, Academic Assistant

In Our Own Voice – (Drama Afterschool Program)
- Lisa Kramer, Coordinator
- Delfi Vargas, Academic Assistant
- Yaribel Campos, Academic Assistant
- Lorelei Quinones, Academic Assistant
Club Educacion - Club “E” (ESL for Adults)
- Steve Favulli, Program Coordinator
- Josephine Falero, Program Assistant
- Ann Taylor, ESL Teacher
- Karen Rodas, ESL Teacher
- Dara Snider, ESL Teacher
- Caitlin Sposato, ESL Teacher
- Mary Recalde, ESL Teacher
- Serenity Sullivan – Jacques, ESL Teacher
- Allys Melissa, Teacher’s Aide
- Alexandra Paladino, Teacher’s Aide
- Jonathan Tiru, Teacher’s Aide
- Ailey Wilder, Teacher’s Aide
- Bremner Smith, Teacher’s Aide: Student
- Katherine Rivera, Lead Academic Assistant
- Gladys Shorette, Academic Assistant

Teaching Corps – Worcester State University Students
- Lizdaly Zavala, Academic Assistant
- Mackenzie Antonelli, Academic Assistant
- Ariel Brandli, Academic Assistant
- Claudio Lewis, Academic Assistant
- Leah Rodriguez, Academic Assistant
- Isaac Ruiz, Academic Assistant
- Emily Fee, Academic Assistant
- Diego Hernandez, Academic Assistant
- Emily Faucher, Academic Assistant
- Julia Holmes, Academic Assistant
- Emily Burawiecz, Academic Assistant
- Meghan McMahon, Academic Assistant
- Jillian O Neill, Academic Assistant
- Nicole Erickson, Academic Assistant
- Jonathan Tiru, Academic Assistant
- Gustavo Bispo, Academic Assistant
- Ernest Honyedzi, Academic Assistant
- John Martel, Academic Assistant
- Stephanie Parretti, Academic Assistant
- Mariann Ortiz, Academic Assistant
- Tasneem Zawahareh, Academic Assistant
- Daniel Glover, Academic Assistant
- Kassandra Urena, Academic Assistant