

# CONNECTING THE DOTS

Report and Recommendations of  
Metropolitan State University of Denver's  
Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) Task Force

JANUARY 2016

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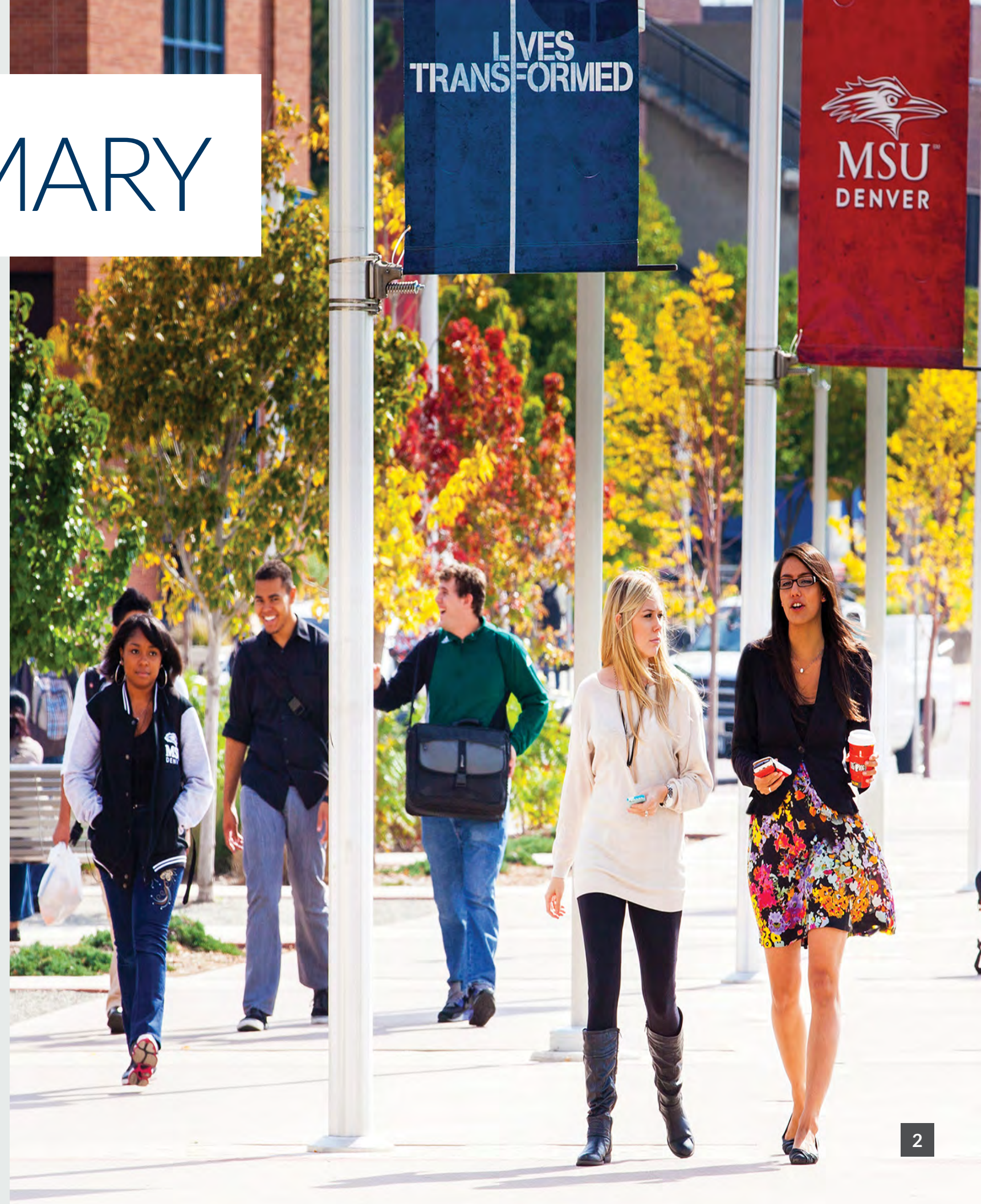
This report presents the findings and recommendations of Metropolitan State University of Denver's HSI Task Force, charged by President Stephen Jordan with identifying strategies to achieve the university's goal of earning federal designation as a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) by fall 2018.

The report begins with a look at why and how MSU Denver has been pursuing this goal for the past nine years, and the progress that has been made on a variety of fronts. It hones in on three target populations for increased recruitment, enrollment, and degree completion of Hispanics: the preK-12 pipeline, including recent high school graduates; transfer students, adults, and military veterans; and currently enrolled students.

The midsection of the report summarizes the findings of the HSI Task Force's three working groups, based on an extensive review of research, institutional data, and demographic trends. In addition to analyzing and discussing this information, the task force took a focused look at a wide variety of existing MSU Denver programs and services to determine the extent to which they intentionally support the educational success of Hispanic students.

The report concludes with a set of recommended strategies, investments, and policies – 21 in all – aimed at meeting the federal requirements for HSI designation by fall 2018. The recommendations are grouped into five categories:

- Institutional infrastructure
- Outreach to preK-12 schools
- Transfer and enrollment initiatives
- Financial aid
- Advocacy and policy development





# CONNECTING THE DOTS

The Progress and Future Direction of MSU Denver's HSI Initiative

## BACKGROUND

Metropolitan State University of Denver currently serves more Hispanic students than any other higher education institution in Colorado. But MSU Denver has not yet been designated a "Hispanic-serving institution" (HSI), which requires at least 25 percent Hispanic undergraduate full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment.<sup>1</sup> Thus MSU Denver is unable to compete for federal grants that can be used to enhance the educational resources needed to better support all of its students.

Unlike other minority-serving institutions, such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities, HSIs were not created to provide postsecondary education for a specific student population. Rather, HSIs are designated by federal law because of high Hispanic population growth in particular geographic locations near existing colleges and universities. The goal of the HSI program is to provide such postsecondary institutions with resources to develop academic and support services to more effectively address the access, recruitment, transfer, retention, and completion needs of the growing Hispanic student population.<sup>2</sup>

Since their inception in the early 1990s, HSI grants have been used for a wide range of activities and resources, including: scientific or laboratory equipment for teaching, construction or renovation of instructional facilities, faculty development, purchase of educational materials, academic tutoring and counseling programs, endowments, and distance-learning technology. In 2008, amendments to the federal Higher Education Act (HEA) expanded the authorized uses of HSI grants to include innovative and customized instruction courses to retain students and move them into core courses; articulation agreements and support programs designed to facilitate the transfer of students from two-year to four-year institutions; and education, counseling, and other services aimed at improving the financial and economic literacy of students and their families.

Excelencia in Education, an independent national research organization that studies Hispanics in higher education, reported the following data on HSIs in 2013-14<sup>3</sup>:

- 409 higher education institutions met the federal designation definition of HSI.
- HSIs currently enroll 60 percent of the nation's Hispanic undergraduates.
- HSIs represent 12 percent of U.S. higher education institutions.
- 53 percent of HSIs are located in urban communities.
- 66 percent of HSIs are public two- and four-year institutions.
- Almost half of all HSIs (46 percent) are public community colleges.
- The states with the most HSIs are California, Florida, New Mexico, and Texas.

Excelencia in Education reports that another 296 higher education institutions across the country will soon meet the requirements for HSI designation because their current Hispanic enrollment is between 15 and 24 percent.<sup>4</sup> This increase in emerging HSIs reflects significant growth in Hispanics enrolling in higher education across the country. The Pew Research Center recently reported that from 1996 to 2012, college enrollment among Hispanics ages 18-24 more than tripled (a 240 percent increase), outpacing increases among blacks (72 percent) and whites (12 percent).<sup>5</sup>

## HSI Program Goal

To provide postsecondary institutions with resources to develop academic and support services to more effectively address the access, recruitment, transfer, retention, and completion needs of the growing Hispanic student population.

# THE HSI PICTURE IN COLORADO

Colorado has one of the largest Hispanic populations in the U.S.<sup>6</sup> The Colorado Department of Higher Education projects that the number of Hispanic residents will increase to more than 25 percent of the state's population by 2021 and by 2040, one in three residents will be Hispanic.<sup>7</sup> Hispanic populations are concentrated in the Denver metropolitan area, where Hispanics currently make up 23 percent of the population and more than a third (34.5 percent) of individuals under age 18.<sup>8</sup>

Currently, Hispanics constitute nearly 33 percent of the state's public K-12 enrollment.<sup>9</sup> In the state's largest district, Denver Public Schools (DPS), Hispanic enrollment is nearly 60 percent,<sup>10</sup> and trends suggest continuing increases in Colorado's high school graduation rates and college attendance.<sup>11</sup> As for higher education, enrollments are expected to grow in Colorado's public postsecondary institutions by more than 20% between now and 2021, and most of this growth will be due to significant increases in the state's Hispanic population.<sup>12</sup>

According to Excelencia in Education, 11 Colorado colleges and universities currently are designated HSIs and another 10 – including MSU Denver – are close to reaching HSI eligibility.<sup>13</sup>

As of fall 2015, MSU Denver's Hispanic headcount was 4,441, or 22.1 percent of the total headcount of 20,105. (Included in this growing Hispanic population are 311 ASSET students, defined as undocumented students who meet MSU Denver's admission requirements and have been accepted for admission or are continuing MSU Denver students eligible for in-state tuition at Colorado's public higher education institutions under the state's ASSET legislation.<sup>14</sup>) Based on fall 2015 census data, Hispanics constitute 20.3 percent of full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment at MSU Denver, or 21.7 percent of FTE enrollment when ASSET students are included.<sup>15</sup>

## MSU DENVER HISPANIC HEADCOUNT

Fall 2015

4,441

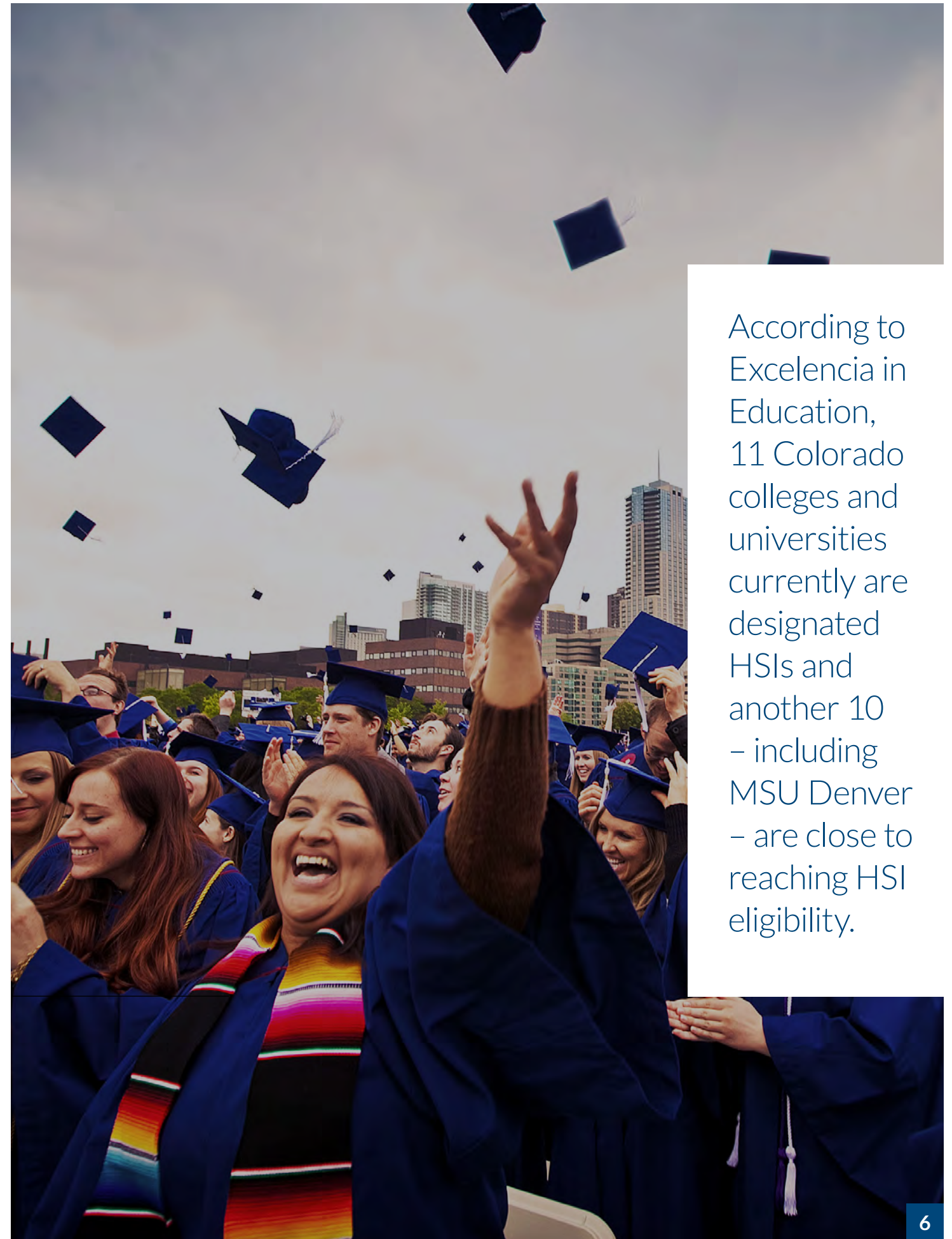
22.1% of total headcount

## HISPANIC FTE ENROLLMENT

Fall 2015

1,507

20.3% of FTE



According to Excelencia in Education, 11 Colorado colleges and universities currently are designated HSIs and another 10 – including MSU Denver – are close to reaching HSI eligibility.



# MSU DENVER'S HSI TASK FORCE

In 2007, MSU Denver launched its HSI Initiative and convened a task force to identify strategies to (1) increase Hispanic FTE enrollment to 25 percent by 2018 and (2) support Hispanic students' educational success through degree attainment.

Over the past eight years, Hispanic FTE enrollment has risen steadily, from a starting point of 12.5 percent to 20.3 percent as of fall 2015. And there have been a number of other accomplishments that were part of the HSI recommendations or implemented separately, including the establishment of the Excel Pre-Collegiate and Retention Programs, support programs for MSU Denver students – especially students of color – such as First Year Success, the Student Academic Success Center, and the Equity in Excellence Initiative.

But reaching the 25 percent target within the next three years stands as a major challenge, and MSU Denver President Stephen Jordan in 2015 instituted a new HSI Task Force to take the university “over the finish line.” The new task force was charged with studying the existing landscape, identifying MSU Denver programs and services that support currently enrolled Hispanic students, and recommending specific strategies and investments to increase Hispanic FTE enrollment to 25 percent by 2018.

The task force began by forming three working groups, one focused on the preK-12 pipeline, including recent high school graduates; a second focused on transfers from community colleges, adult students, and military veterans; and the third focused on retention of current students.

This report, *Connecting the Dots*, reviews the findings of the working groups and concludes with a set of 21 specific recommendations aimed at bringing MSU Denver's HSI Initiative to fruition.

## KEY FINDINGS

### TARGET POPULATIONS FOR INCREASED ENROLLMENT

#### PreK-12 students and recent high school graduates

MSU Denver draws its students primarily from an eight-county region that includes Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, and Weld. Using a combination of data from the Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Department of Higher Education, and MSU Denver's Office of Institutional Research (OIR), the task force determined that nearly 200,000 Hispanic students are currently in the preK-12 pipeline in these eight counties.<sup>16</sup> [See Table 1]

While there is growth in the Hispanic population in most schools throughout the eight-county region, the distribution of Hispanic students tends to be in a cluster of districts and schools in each county, with the largest concentration in schools located in and around the city of Denver. [See Figure 1]

**Table 1. Hispanic PreK12 Enrollment in Selected Schools in MSU Denver's Eight-County Service Area**

#### Adams County:

**Total Hispanic Enrollment = 41,555 (49.3%)**

<b>Adams 12 Five Star Schools</b>	<b>14,618 (37.8%)</b>
• Thornton High School	1,091 (61.4%)
• Mountain Range High School	549 (27.9%)
• Northglenn High School	1,141 (60.8%)
<b>Adams 14</b>	<b>6,273 (82.7%)</b>
• Adams City High School	1,482 (83.1%)
<b>District 27J</b>	<b>7,535 (44.1%)</b>
• Brighton High School	1,044 (54.4%)
• Prairie View High School	801 (42.4%)
<b>Westminster 50</b>	<b>7,557 (74.4%)</b>
• Westminster High School	1,844 (75.1%)

#### Arapahoe County:

**Total Hispanic Enrollment = 37,908 (31.9%)**

<b>Cherry Creek 5</b>	<b>10,186 (18.7%)</b>
• Overland High School	764 (32.6%)
<b>Adams-Arapahoe 28J (Aurora)</b>	<b>22,482 (53.9%)</b>
• Aurora Central High School	1,461 (83.6%)
• Gateway High School	908 (52.0%)
• Hinkley High School	1,468 (67.7%)
• Rangeview High School	802 (34.2%)

#### Boulder:

**Total Hispanic Enrollment = 14,618 (23.6%)**

<b>Boulder Valley</b>	<b>9,062 (18.0%)</b>
• Centaurus High School	295 (28.7%)
<b>St. Vrain Valley</b>	<b>9,556 (29.1%)</b>
• Skyline High School	781 (55%)
• Longmont High School	379 (32.2%)
• Frederick Sr. High School	322 (31.3%)

#### Broomfield:

Hispanic enrollment distributed among six surrounding school districts - Adams 12 Five Star Schools, Boulder Valley, St. Vrain Valley, Brighton, Fort Lupton, Jefferson County

#### Denver:

**Total Hispanic Enrollment = 50,467 (56.8%)**

• Abraham Lincoln High School	1,350 (91.4%)
• Bruce Randolph School	743 (87.4%)
• CEC Middle College	375 (87.2%)
• East High School	594 (23.0%)
• George Washington High School	425 (31.3%)
• John F. Kennedy High School	883 (70.2%)
• Martin Luther King, Jr. EC	905 (83.2%)
• North High School	685 (81.5%)

#### Douglas:

**Total Hispanic Enrollment = 9,487 (14.2%)**

• Douglas County High School	259 (13.9%)
• Highlands Ranch High School	227 (13.9%)

#### Jefferson:

**Total Hispanic Enrollment = 21,143 (24.4%)**

• Alameda Int'l High School	604 (72.5%)
• Arvada West High School	383 (42.7%)
• Bear Creek High School	570 (34.1%)
• Jefferson High School	409 (83.6%)
• Lakewood High School	641 (30.2%)
• Pomona High School	435 (30.1%)

#### Weld:

**Total Hispanic Enrollment = 19,336 (47.2%)**

<b>Greeley 6</b>	<b>12,623 (59.6%)</b>
• Greeley Central High School	977 (66.1%)
• Greeley West High School	955 (60.4%)
• Jefferson High School	307 (75.4%)
• Northridge High School	811 (72.5%)

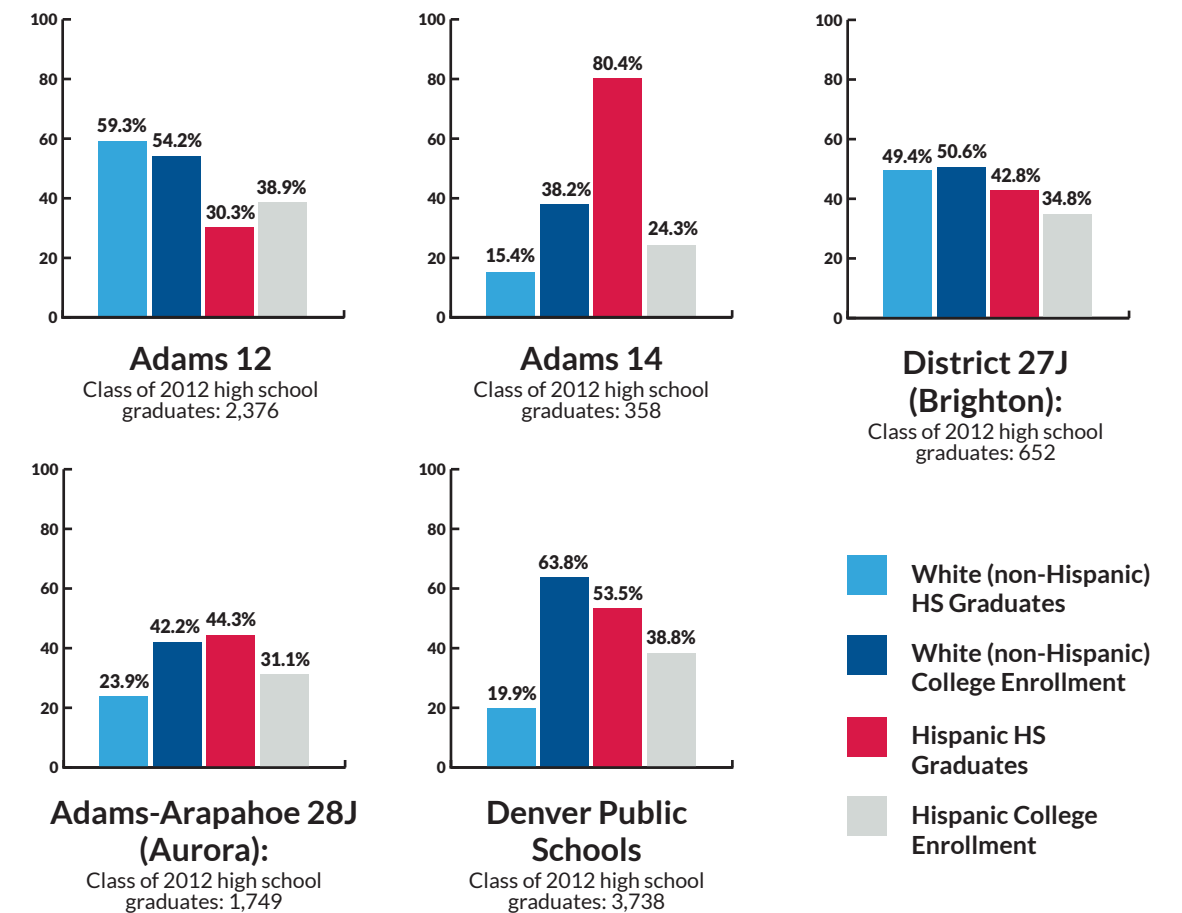
Source: Colorado Department of Education

**Figure 1. Colorado School Districts and Schools with High Hispanic Enrollments**



The education pipeline does not end at high school graduation, and Hispanics across the state are enrolling in college at higher rates. In a recent postsecondary progress report to the state legislature, the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) reported that between 2009 and 2012, Hispanic college enrollment increased from 39.8 percent to 41.6 percent.<sup>17</sup> But the CDHE report also showed that Hispanic students graduating from the districts where they make up more than 25 percent of graduating classes are enrolling in two- and four-year colleges at lower rates than their non-Hispanic peers.<sup>18</sup> For example, the Adams 14 School District in Adams County had a 2012 graduating class of 358 students, over 80 percent of them Hispanic. But only 24.3 percent of these Hispanic graduates enrolled in college the following fall, compared to over 38 percent of White (non-Hispanic) graduates.<sup>19</sup> [See Table 2]

**Table 2. Hispanic College-Going Rates in Selected Districts, 2012**



Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education

According to enrollment census reports, the number of Hispanic students coming to MSU Denver, in particular, also is low.<sup>20</sup> [See Table 3] Clearly, there is an opportunity for MSU Denver to recruit and enroll more high school graduates in the targeted districts, given that both the Hispanic preK-12 student population and the Hispanic high school graduation rate are growing.

Sources: Dept. of Labor (DOL ACS 2007-2011) Data for School District boundaries, Colorado Dept. of Education 2014 Pupil Membership District Data. Districts shown are within the eight-county Hispanic population region that includes: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, and Weld counties.

Dr. Stella Todd, 11/30/02015

Table 3. Hispanic high school graduates from selected schools enrolling at MSU Denver, 2010-15

High School Name & County	Fall 2010		Fall 2011		Fall 2012		Fall 2013		Fall 2014		Fall 2015	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Total New First-Time Student Body</b>	1,775	100.0%	1,691	100.0%	1,746	100.0%	1,675	100.0%	1,721	100.0%	1,609	100.0%
<b>Hispanic or Latino Student Body</b>	445	25.1%	485	28.7%	532	30.5%	545	32.5%	514	29.9%	511	31.8%
<b>Specific High School Codes</b>	192	43.1%	231	47.6%	260	48.9%	246	45.1%	247	48.1%	242	47.4%
<b>Adams County:</b>	67	34.9%	69	29.9%	78	30.0%	77	31.3%	91	36.8%	77	31.8%
Thornton High School	13	6.8%	12	5.2%	12	4.6%	11	4.5%	8	3.2%	11	4.5%
Northglenn High School	13	6.8%	6	2.6%	16	6.2%	10	4.1%	15	6.1%	20	8.3%
Adams City High School	10	5.2%	19	8.2%	13	5.0%	19	7.7%	21	8.5%	10	4.1%
Brighton High School	4	2.1%	7	3.0%	2	0.8%	3	1.2%	6	2.4%	7	2.9%
Mountain Range High School	7	3.6%	7	3.0%	7	2.7%	7	2.8%	9	3.6%	3	1.2%
Prairie View High School	7	3.6%	3	1.3%	11	4.2%	10	4.1%	11	4.5%	9	3.7%
Westminster High School	13	6.8%	15	6.5%	17	6.5%	17	6.9%	21	8.5%	17	7.0%
<b>Arapahoe County:</b>	33	17.2%	33	14.3%	43	16.5%	38	15.4%	29	11.7%	43	17.8%
Overland High School	8	4.2%	2	0.9%	13	5.0%	8	3.3%	7	2.8%	6	2.5%
Aurora Central High School	8	4.2%	12	5.2%	10	3.8%	12	4.9%	8	3.2%	8	3.3%
Gateway High School	4	2.1%	4	1.7%	9	3.5%	5	2.0%	1	0.4%	5	2.1%
Rangeview High School	6	3.1%	8	3.5%	3	1.2%	4	1.6%	8	3.2%	8	3.3%
Hinkley High School	7	3.6%	7	3.0%	8	3.1%	9	3.7%	5	2.0%	16	6.6%
<b>Boulder County:</b>	8	4.2%	16	6.9%	13	5.0%	8	3.3%	9	3.6%	12	5.0%
Centaurus High School	2	1.0%	5	2.2%	8	3.1%	4	1.6%	6	2.4%	3	1.2%
St Vrain Valley		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Skyline High School	2	1.0%	5	2.2%	3	1.2%	2	0.8%		0.0%	5	2.1%
Longmont High School	2	1.0%	3	1.3%	1	0.4%		0.0%	1	0.4%		0.0%
Frederick Senior High School	2	1.0%	3	1.3%	1	0.4%	2	0.8%	2	0.8%	4	1.7%
<b>Denver County:</b>	42	21.9%	67	29.0%	71	27.3%	83	33.7%	79	32.0%	73	30.2%
Abraham Lincoln High School	13	6.8%	15	6.5%	19	7.3%	15	6.1%	27	10.9%	17	7.0%
CEC Middle College	1	0.5%	4	1.7%	4	1.5%	2	0.8%	4	1.6%	2	0.8%
George Washington High School	4	2.1%	3	1.3%	1	0.4%	6	2.4%	6	2.4%	4	1.7%
John F Kennedy High School	7	3.6%	21	9.1%	15	5.8%	17	6.9%	7	2.8%	22	9.1%
Martin Luther King, JR. EC	4	2.1%	3	1.3%	9	3.5%	5	2.0%	2	0.8%	2	0.8%
East High School	6	3.1%	12	5.2%	9	3.5%	18	7.3%	16	6.5%	19	7.9%
North High School	4	2.1%	7	3.0%	4	1.5%	13	5.3%	12	4.9%	4	1.7%
Bruce Randolph School	3	1.6%	2	0.9%	10	3.8%	7	2.8%	5	2.0%	3	1.2%
<b>Douglas County:</b>	3	1.6%	5	2.2%	6	2.3%	4	1.6%	5	2.0%	5	2.1%
Douglas County High School	1	0.5%	2	0.9%	1	0.4%		0.0%	2	0.8%	1	0.4%
Highlands Ranch High School	2	1.0%	3	1.3%	5	1.9%	4	1.6%	3	1.2%	4	1.7%
<b>Jefferson County:</b>	38	19.8%	36	15.6%	45	17.3%	30	12.2%	33	13.4%	29	12.0%
Alameda International High School	5	2.6%	6	2.6%	8	3.1%	6	2.4%	4	1.6%	7	2.9%
Arvada West High School	2	1.0%	6	2.6%	4	1.5%	2	0.8%	3	1.2%	2	0.8%
Bear Creek High School	15	7.8%	9	3.9%	10	3.8%	7	2.8%	11	4.5%	7	2.9%
Jefferson High School	6	3.1%	2	0.9%	4	1.5%	5	2.0%	2	0.8%	2	0.8%
Lakewood High School	7	3.6%	8	3.5%	12	4.6%	6	2.4%	6	2.4%	7	2.9%
Pomona High School	3	1.6%	5	2.2%	7	2.7%	4	1.6%	7	2.8%	4	1.7%
<b>Weld County:</b>	1	0.5%	5	2.2%	4	1.5%	6	2.4%	1	0.4%	3	1.2%
Greeley Central High School		0.0%	1	0.4%	3	1.2%	5	2.0%		0.0%	3	1.2%
Greeley West High School	1	0.5%	1	0.4%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Jefferson High School		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Northridge High School		0.0%	3	1.3%	1	0.4%	1	0.4%	1	0.4%	1	0.4%



## Transfer students, adults, and military veterans

### Transfer Students

The most recent Colorado Department of Higher Education report on the postsecondary progress of high school graduates shows that Hispanic students are the most likely to enroll at a two-year college (42%).<sup>21</sup> But according to an analysis by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), among all student groups enrolled in Colorado's community colleges, Hispanic students are the least likely to transfer to a four-year institution to complete their baccalaureate degrees.<sup>22</sup> The Hispanic student transfer rate is 8.8 percent compared to 15.3 percent for Asian students and 13.2 percent for white students.<sup>23</sup>

According to 2009-14 data from the Colorado Community College System (CCCS), Hispanics constituted 17.9 percent of enrollments among their 13 colleges. MSU Denver benefits from this large pool of postsecondary students; among the students who transfer from CCCS community colleges to MSU Denver, 18.9 percent are Hispanic students.<sup>24</sup>

Of 4,391 new students enrolled at MSU Denver in fall 2015, 2,433 (55 percent) were transfer students drawn primarily from five community colleges: Community College of Denver, Front Range Community College, Arapahoe Community College, Red Rocks Community College, and Community College of Aurora.<sup>25</sup> Hispanic students represented almost 20 percent of the 1,704 students who transferred to MSU Denver from these five institutions in 2014-15. [See Table 4]

Nationally, Hispanics are a young population compared to other racial and ethnic groups, with a median age of 27 compared to whites (42), blacks (32) and Asians (35).<sup>26</sup> The Colorado demographics are similar; the median age of Hispanics is 26, compared to age 40 for whites.

While the emphasis on Hispanic postsecondary education attainment has focused primarily on 18-to-24-year-old traditional aged students, it is important to note that almost 65 percent of Hispanics over 25 years old have at least a high school education, and 1.2 million Hispanics age 18 and older are veterans of the U.S. armed services.<sup>27</sup>

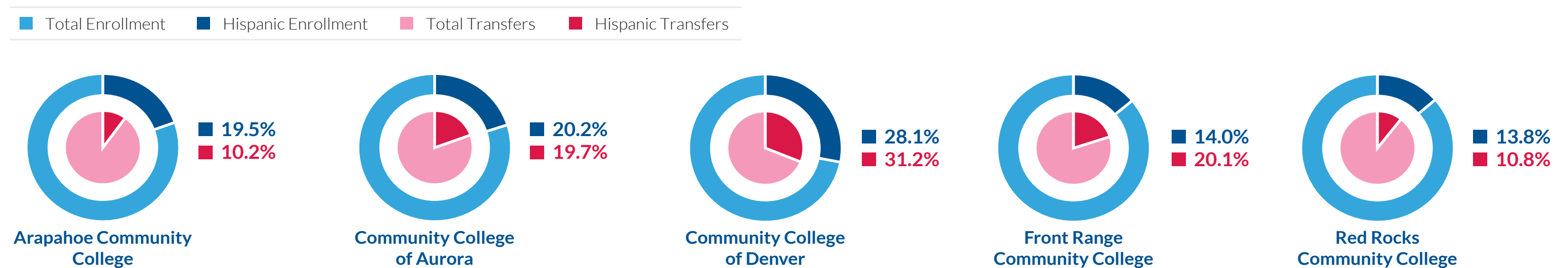
Hispanics typically start postsecondary education at community colleges, including many who are over the age of 25 and/or military veterans.<sup>28</sup> According to a CCCS fact sheet, more than 46 percent of the students enrolled at its colleges are over 25 years old.<sup>29</sup> These students could be specifically targeted for outreach and transfer support to MSU Denver where they can be connected to an existing peer population.

### Adult Students

MSU Denver's student population approximates the demographics of community colleges in the state. About 43 percent of fall 2015 enrollments were over the age of 25, with Hispanics making up 33.3 percent of these older students.<sup>30</sup>

According to a recent study by Higher Ed Insight, the number of adults entering or returning to colleges and universities to complete credentials will continue to grow, as more and more employment opportunities require higher-level skills. The study findings also suggest that increasing numbers of adult learners will require colleges and universities to change both the services they offer to students, as well as how those services are implemented.<sup>31</sup>

Table 4. Hispanic Transfers to MSU Denver from Selected Community Colleges, 2014-15



Source: Colorado Community College System

Research conducted by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) has found that a key characteristic distinguishing reentry adults from traditional-aged college students is the high likelihood that they are juggling other roles while attending school, including those of worker, spouse or partner, parent, caregiver, and community member.<sup>32</sup> Among the approaches that “adult-friendly” colleges and universities are using to accommodate these multiple roles are one-stop centers or “concierge” services where adults have advocates and a place to go to take care of advising, admissions, and financial aid during evening hours or weekends, or online.<sup>33</sup>

For Hispanic adults, especially those who have been out of education for a few years, having advocacy support to help navigate the multiple and confusing steps of the admissions and enrollment process can lead to success that extends to the other members of the family and community. In a Chronicle of Higher Education opinion article, Excelencia in Education co-founder Deborah Santiago reflected on this extended-legacy approach:

“Today my three siblings and I have all earned college educations. And so has my father. It took him 20 years, but he earned his degree while raising a family and working full time. His persistence, support, and example reinforced our family commitment to a college education for all. And this legacy continues: My eldest niece recently graduated from high school, and she, too, has enrolled in college.”<sup>34</sup>

- *Deborah Santiago, Co-founder, Excelencia in Education*

### Military Veterans

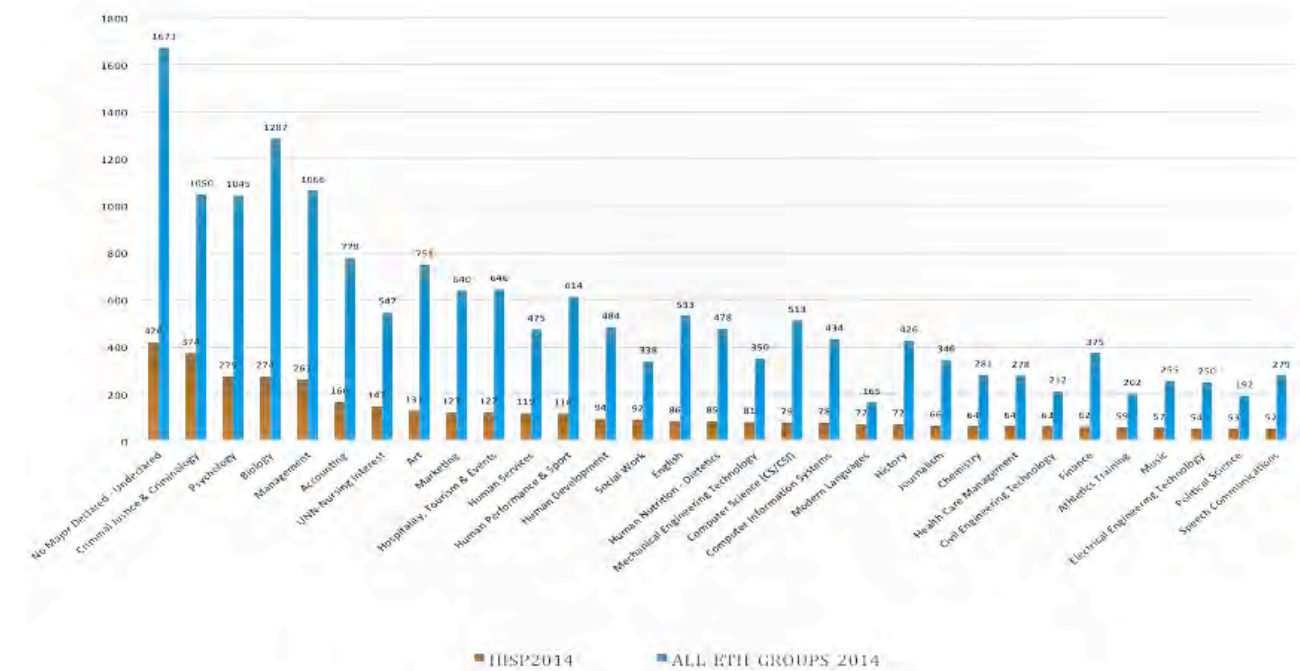
According to fall 2015 census data, 824 veterans are enrolled and receiving military education benefits at MSU Denver, about 20 percent of whom are Hispanic veterans enrolled in undergraduate classes.<sup>35</sup>

Currently, veterans of color make up about 20 percent of the total nationwide veteran population, the majority of whom are African American (11 percent) and Hispanic (6 percent). Hispanics are the youngest veterans (19 percent between the ages of 19 and 34).<sup>36</sup> Although the Hispanic veteran pool of potential college students may appear modest, there is a growing potential pool of future college students currently serving in the armed forces.<sup>37</sup> According to U.S. Department of Defense data, in 2013 there were 159,182 Hispanics (or 11.6 percent of active-duty members) in the armed forces.<sup>38</sup> While it is not known how many of these active members will leave military service and enter colleges and universities, there is a national push for them to do so. Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) to support Hispanic veterans in higher education institutions designated as HSIs.<sup>39</sup>

### Retention of current students

MSU Denver currently enrolls 4,441 Hispanic undergraduate students, or about 22 percent of its 20,105 undergraduate students. These students are distributed over 30 areas of study, but are most heavily concentrated as criminal justice, psychology, biology, management, accounting, and undeclared majors.<sup>40</sup> [See Figure 2]

Figure 2: Hispanic and total enrollment more than 50 students for all majors, 2014



Source: Metropolitan State University of Denver, Office of Institutional Research

According to the university’s Office of Institutional Research (OIR), Hispanic students have a first-year retention rate of 65 percent compared to a retention rate of 63 percent for all full-time, first-time freshmen.<sup>41</sup> But many are not meeting their educational goals and finishing with a degree. Analysis by MSU Denver’s Equity in Excellence Committee reveals that Hispanics leave the university at significant levels after year 4 and before attaining a degree.<sup>42</sup>

A variety of factors affect access and retention rates in colleges and universities, including level of preparation for college measured by rigor of academic courses taken in high school, grade-point average, and ACT/SAT scores.<sup>43</sup> Research at the state and national levels identifies several other key indicators of postsecondary education persistence, with special focus on Hispanics, including:



- **Level of family income and financial need.** In 2011-12, 87.6 percent of Hispanics at two- and four-year institutions received federal aid.<sup>44</sup> For Hispanic students, as for many students, college costs and available financial aid are among the most significant factors that influence their decision to enroll in college and persist through completion.<sup>45</sup> At MSU Denver, 3,669 out of 5,504 of Hispanic students (72.6 percent) received financial aid in 2014-15.<sup>46</sup> Further institutional research would be needed to determine the extent to which students receiving aid have unmet need.
- **Parental education levels and first-generation status.** Numerous research studies show that first-generation college students persist in postsecondary education and attain credentials at lower rates than their non-first-generation counterparts.<sup>47</sup> About half of Hispanic students nationwide have parents whose highest level of education is a high school diploma or less.<sup>48</sup> At MSU Denver, 2,274 (51.2 percent) of Hispanics are the first generation in their families to enter college.

A variety of factors affect access and retention rates in colleges and universities, including level of preparation for college measured by rigor of academic courses taken in high school, grade-point average, and ACT/SAT scores.

- **Development of knowledge about and aspirations for college.** Extensive research shows that low-income and first-generation students often do not have the knowledge necessary to successfully transition from high school to a postsecondary institution. The entry process, which involves taking admissions tests, researching schools, and applying to and ultimately selecting a postsecondary institution, can be difficult for many first-generation students to navigate. Lacking the proper guidance and information about this process may be associated with lower postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates.<sup>49</sup>

- **Number of remedial courses taken.** Students needing remediation are more likely to drop out of college without earning a degree. In Colorado, almost 69 percent of Hispanic students enrolled at two-year colleges and 36 percent at four-year institutions required developmental education in 2014.<sup>50</sup> In Colorado, remediation classes are taught at community colleges, so few students enter MSU Denver requiring developmental education services. In fall 2015, stretch classes and/or developmental education services are being provided to 171 (3.85 percent) of Hispanic students at MSU Denver.
- **Intensity of credit enrollment.** The U.S. Department of Education considers part-time college enrollment to be a risk factor for dropping out of postsecondary education before completion of a degree. Nationally, Hispanics' high level of part-time enrollment has adverse effects on their levels of degree completion.<sup>51</sup> Almost 40 percent of Hispanic students at MSU Denver in fall 2015 are enrolled as part-time students, taking on average

7.17 credits. Full-time Hispanic students are taking on average 13.56 credits, for an overall average of 11.02 credits.<sup>52</sup>

- **Choice of academic major.** A 2013 study on higher education transfer and retention in Colorado conducted by NCHEMS found that college students who are undecided about their paths of study and haven't declared a major have the lowest retention rates.<sup>53</sup> At MSU Denver in fall 2015, 312 Hispanic students (7 percent) have not declared their major areas of study.<sup>54</sup>
- **Transfer and transitions between institutions.** Numerous national studies have found that Hispanic students who begin their postsecondary education at community colleges and indicate an intention to transfer to four-year institutions rarely do so.<sup>55</sup> In 2014-15, 379 Hispanic students (19.2 percent) transferred from 15 Colorado community colleges; almost 88 percent of them are from the five community colleges outlined in Table 4.

All of the above-mentioned risk factors apply to Hispanic students at MSU Denver and affect their rates of college completion. Addressing student knowledge, needs, or behaviors in any of these areas could positively affect enrollment and degree attainment.

## KEY FINDINGS

### MSU DENVER PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT HISPANIC STUDENT SUCCESS

A key component of the HSI Task Force's work was determining the extent to which various MSU Denver programs intentionally target support to the three potential and existing pools of Hispanic students: (1) preK-12 and recent high school graduates, (2) transfers, adults, and military veterans; and (3) existing students. The task force conducted an institution-wide survey, but the working groups encountered several challenges that served to limit the scope and depth of their analyses, including:

- Modest response to their survey request for program information
- Inconsistent quality of program descriptions
- Lack of adequate program data to guide task force members' understanding of purpose and outcomes
- Lack of program metrics for determining when access is taking place, frequency of access, quality of access, and yield outcomes (e.g., number of Hispanics actually enrolled and retained)
- Little time to do necessary follow-up with program staff to request clarifying information.

Despite these challenges, the working groups' analyses brought to light a variety of useful information about such programs.



### PreK-12 students and recent high school graduates

The working group determined that out of nine submissions, only two MSU Denver programs show specific intent to recruit and enroll Hispanic students.<sup>56</sup>

One is the Excel Program, which supports students in six high schools in four Adams County school districts and is the only institutionally funded pre-collegiate program that focuses on recruiting, admitting, and enrolling Hispanic high school students. The other is the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), a federal grant-funded program serving first-generation students from seasonal farm worker/migrant backgrounds, most of whom are Hispanic. CAMP is not a pre-collegiate program and has restrictions on who can participate, the length of time for which it provides assistance, and the number of students it can support.

The working group noted that MSU Denver has a large number of programs that are connected to or partner with K-12 schools, that help students become aware of college options, and that could in the long term increase the number of Hispanic students enrolling at MSU Denver. But the working group concluded that because these programs typically lack a specific recruitment function, they do not provide a reliable way to track students from an initial point of contact to actual enrollment at the university. Among the questions that emerged in the working group’s discussions were: how school-university partnerships should be defined, how data on student access are tracked, and whether all school-university partnerships should include a recruitment component.

### Transfer students, adults, and military veterans

The working group reviewed more than 20 programs and activities and determined that several of them -- including Brother 2 Brother, New Student Orientation Family/Parent Orientation in Spanish, and the Family Literacy Program’s Spanish GED classes -- specifically target Hispanic students for enrollment or transfer. The working group also took note of a new effort, through the Transfer Student Success and Persistence Program, to create transfer affinity groups (TAGs) that will provide support for special populations of transfer students, including adults and military veterans. One of the purposes of the TAGs will be to increase Hispanic recruitment and retention rates.

The working group concluded, however, that despite a broad range of programs, initiatives, and events (e.g., campus visits, fairs, mailings, open houses) aimed at transfers, adults, and military veterans, there currently are no mechanisms within MSU Denver to effectively track or disaggregate data by Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in ways that isolate initial points of contact through enrollment at the university.

**MSU Denver currently does not have a mechanism to coordinate, collect, and track data from programs and initiatives aimed at Hispanics and other students of color.**

### Retention of current students

The working group reviewed 32 survey submissions and identified roughly 20 retention-related programs that have features aimed at intentionally retaining Hispanic students:

- College Assistance Migrant Program
- College Completion Program
- Colorado Alliance for Minority Participation
- Colorado Challenge
- Denver Metro Chem Scholars
- Excel at MSU Denver
- First Year Success
- GLBT Student Services at Auraria
- Immigrant Services Program
- Institute for Women’s Studies and Services
- Journey Through Our Heritage
- Mathematics Peer Study Group
- MSU Denver Writing Center
- Puksta Scholars Program
- Scholars Success Program
- Supplemental Instruction
- Transfer Student Success and Persistence
- TRIO/SSS
- Tutoring Center
- Urban Leadership Program

Members of the working group expressed concern about the difficulty of discerning retention and completion outcomes because of a lack of clarity about what makes up retention programs, insufficient data collection, and the lack of consistent metrics. The working group suggested creation of a mechanism to regularly collect and monitor program data with goals and outcomes metrics, and to make the results available across the university.



## NEXT STEPS: HSI TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Along with data collection and analysis conducted by its three working groups, the HSI Task Force was informed by research literature specifically aimed at supporting access, retention, and college completion for Hispanic students. Excelencia in Education has been a particularly valuable resource in clarifying what it means to be “Hispanic-serving,” beyond just earning the federal eligibility designation.

Out of its rich body of research emerge the following key strengths of HSIs and emerging HSIs that demonstrate authentic commitment to the educational success of Hispanics on their campuses<sup>57</sup>:

- Establishing clear goals and specific outcomes for all of their students, including Hispanic students
- Maintaining high expectations for their students, faculty, and staff
- Offering culturally sensitive programs and services
- Exhibiting pride in their status as an Hispanic-serving institution
- Providing programs and services that challenge and support their students, especially in the first two years of enrollment (or after year 4, as documented by MSU Denver’s “Excellence in Equity” report on Hispanic persistence)
- Celebrating student effort and achievements
- Employing faculty who value their primary responsibility for teaching.

Research also has identified several specific challenges faced by HSIs in sustaining high commitment to the educational success of Hispanic students, including:

- Creating peer communities within public, urban, commuter campuses
- Managing growing enrollments of both recent high school graduates and older, returning students, many of whom did not have adequate secondary school preparation for college-level academic work
- Having limited financial resources from tuition, state, and federal sources
- Having limited institutional support for faculty opportunities in research, scholarly pursuits, publication, and the possibility of external funding.

With these important touchstones and challenges in mind, MSU Denver’s HSI Task Force has put together a set of recommendations aimed at meeting the federal requirements for HSI designation by fall 2018. The recommendations, which you will find in the following section, are grouped into five categories:

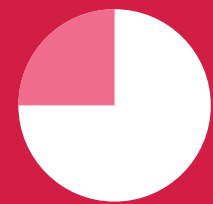
- > Institutional infrastructure
- > Outreach to PreK-12 schools
- > Transfer and enrollment initiatives
- > Financial aid
- > Advocacy and policy development

# MSU Denver's Pathway to Becoming an HSI

## OVERVIEW

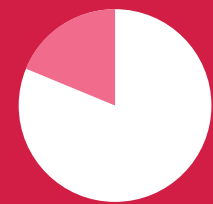


HSIs provide institutions with resources to address the access, recruitment, transfer, retention, and completion needs of the growing Hispanic student population.



**25%**

REQUIRED FOR  
HSI ELIGIBILITY



**20%**

MSU  
DENVER

Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) requires at least 25% Hispanic undergraduate full-time equivalent enrollment. MSU Denver aims to reach 25% FTE by 2018.

**#1**

MSU Denver currently serves more Hispanic students than any other higher education institution in Colorado.

## WHY NOW?



Currently has no HSI designation and therefore cannot compete for a variety of federal grants.



The college access and completion needs of a large and growing Hispanic student population in the Denver metropolitan area are not being adequately met.

**3 YEARS**

The timeline designated by MSU Denver president to address major challenges and identify more determined strategies

## TARGET POPULATIONS

In order to meet 25% FTE by 2018, the HSI task force determined three specific target groups for retaining and increasing Hispanic enrollment.



**1** Pre-K Students & Recent High School Graduates



**2** Transfer Students, Adults & Military Veterans



**3** Retention of Current Students

## STRATEGIES



Institutional Infrastructure



Outreach to PreK-12 Schools



Transfer and Enrollment Initiatives



Financial Aid



Advocacy and Policy Development



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## A Plan to Increase Hispanic Access and Success at MSU Denver

MSU Denver currently has in place a variety of research-based programs and services aimed at addressing the needs of first-generation college students. Collectively, these supports help to create an inclusive campus environment that encourages Hispanic enrollment and degree attainment. But the HSI Task Force concluded that MSU Denver can and should do far more. It identified areas where institutional policies and practices conflict, where gaps exist, and where strategic investments could be made to better meet current and emerging needs.

## INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

### DESIGN A VERSATILE FRAMEWORK OF GUIDANCE, SUPPORT, AND ENRICHMENT TO SERVE HISPANIC STUDENTS FROM ENROLLMENT THROUGH DEGREE COMPLETION.

For Hispanics, and other first-generation students of color, faculty-student and peer interaction programs such as mentoring, counseling, and advising have been shown to positively affect enrollment, retention, and persistence.<sup>58</sup> A common theme identified across all three HSI Task Force working groups was the need for a more strategic approach to providing Hispanic first-generation students (both traditional and nontraditional) with ongoing assistance in navigating admissions, financial aid, enrollment, and other institutional and academic requirements. Navigation support should be coupled with a range of opportunities to interact with faculty and peers, participate in research, access support services and other resources, and explore disciplines and majors that lead to high-demand, high-wage jobs.

### CREATE A DATA-TRACKING SYSTEM ON HISPANIC SUCCESS.

MSU Denver currently does not have a mechanism to coordinate, collect, and track data from programs and initiatives aimed at Hispanics and other students of color. A robust program database with the capacity to monitor key metrics would ensure that programs are demonstrably meeting expectations for student success, as well as uncover unmet needs and gaps in services. One component of this effort could be a glossary containing definitions of program terms and methodologies for collecting and analyzing data.

### DEVELOP AN HSI WEBSITE.

The task force recommends the development of an interactive website that would serve as a mechanism for (1) heightening the visibility of MSU Denver's commitment to its HSI mission; (2) disseminating data, program information, strategies, and outcomes reports; and (3) providing a way for Hispanic students to widely share and discuss their college experiences. Research has shown that testimonials and other qualitative information can play an important role in influencing programs, policies, and institutional behavior.<sup>59</sup> A link to the new HSI website should be prominently displayed on the home page of MSU Denver's website.

### INCREASE THE DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY OF MSU DENVER'S LEADERS, FACULTY, AND STAFF.

A research review by The College Board found that Hispanic faculty and staff can contribute to the success of Hispanic students by aiding their adjustment to the college environment, providing academic advice, serving as role models, and helping to prepare all students to live

in a global and pluralistic society.<sup>60</sup> The HSI Task Force recommends that an explicit commitment be made to (1) increasing the hiring and promotion of Hispanic leaders, faculty, and staff and (2) building bilingual capacity and support. While most Hispanic students are English speakers, many of them have parents and other family members whose first or primary language is Spanish. To create a campus community that promotes and celebrates diversity and multiculturalism, the task force recommends building bilingual capacity within departments, offices, and programs across the campus, including oral and written translation services for websites, outreach materials and marketing documents, and open houses and recruitment events aimed at current and future MSU Denver students and their families.

### **CREATE A MULTICULTURAL CENTER THAT WOULD SERVE AS A HUB FOR MSU DENVER STUDENTS OF COLOR, FOSTERING ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT.**

An interest group made up of faculty and staff has put forth a request for the creation of an ALANA (African, Latino, Asian, Native American) Multicultural Center at MSU Denver. The task force recommends that MSU Denver support the ALANA proposal and ensure that the center has sufficient capacity for Hispanic students to build a peer community, engage in campus-based clubs and activities, participate in scholarship and undergraduate research in partnership with university faculty, and provide faculty and staff with professional development training on issues of race, culture, and ethnicity across all disciplines. The task force also suggests that ALANA be aligned and/or collaborate with other MSU Denver programs and student-run initiatives that target students of color, including immigrant and undocumented students, such as Dreamers Task Force, Latino Faculty and Staff Association, Brother-2-Brother, Rise, Immigrant Services, and others.

### **ESTABLISH AN ADULT STUDENT SERVICES CENTER.**

Research shows that adult students on college campuses feel especially isolated because they are juggling many roles and responsibilities.<sup>61</sup> A center that includes “concierge” support with trained staff to help adults navigate processes such as application, enrollment, and registration has had demonstrated success on other higher education campuses across the country.<sup>62</sup> The HSI Task Force recommends establishment of an Adult Student Services Center that would provide Hispanic adult students with access to resources that address their unique needs related to peer connections, family responsibilities, and work schedules.

### **INTEGRATE HSI STRATEGIES ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY.**

MSU Denver regularly convenes institution-wide task forces, committees, advisory councils, and other groups to study and address issues crucial to strengthening programs that support students. The HSI Task Force recommends integrating HSI strategies with the agendas

of task forces, committees, and other groups involved in supporting access and degree completion of first-generation, low-income students of color, such as the Equity in Excellence Committee, Retention Task Force, Dreamers Task Force, and others.

## **OUTREACH TO PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

### **ELEVATE MSU DENVER’S COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING HISPANIC STUDENTS FROM THE EARLY GRADES THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL.**

First-generation Hispanic students need a variety of support services that start as early as preschool, ranging from mentoring, tutoring, and enrichment to college-awareness and readiness programs. The HSI Task Force identified multiple campus-based efforts designed to engage PreK-12 students, but which are uncoordinated and for the most part not visible to the broader MSU Denver community.

The task force recommends creating a position that would help coordinate and provide strategic direction to the menu of campus-based college readiness initiatives and partnerships targeted to districts and schools in the eight-county service area that enroll a high number of Hispanic students (25 percent or more).

### **DEVELOP A CADRE OF HIGH-SCHOOL-TO-COLLEGE TRANSITION COUNSELORS.**

One of the greatest challenges for first-generation Hispanic college students is navigating the complex and often confusing institutional process from application through enrollment. The HSI Task Force recommends developing “transition counselors” who would serve as liaisons between high schools and MSU Denver, with a specific focus on guiding students through the processes of applying for enrollment and financial aid; staying connected with them in the months after they are accepted, to avoid “summer melt”; ensuring they enroll and are attending classes; providing mentoring support through the first semester of their freshman year; and helping them connect with campus-based support services. Institutional investments should be targeted to districts and schools in the eight-county service area that enroll a high number of Hispanic students (25 percent or more).

### **EXPLORE WAYS TO INCREASE COLLEGE-GOING RATES AMONG HISPANIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS.**

Concurrent enrollment programs have been found to increase academic preparation for college and decrease the time it takes for students to complete their degrees.<sup>63</sup> In Colorado, the number of Hispanic high school students who participate and complete concurrent enrollment classes and earn college credit currently reflects the percentage of their high school population.<sup>64</sup> However, many Hispanic students do not successfully transition from high school to college even when they have met all college entrance requirements and been accepted for admission.<sup>65</sup> The HSI Task Force recommends exploring strategies (including pilot programs) that capitalize on the interest of Hispanic students in earning college credit in high school through concurrent enrollment.



## BUILD A STRONGER PRESENCE IN HISPANIC COMMUNITIES.

The university's recent exploration to develop an MSU Denver satellite campus in the predominantly Hispanic southwest Denver corridor represents an outstanding opportunity to create connections with families, schools, neighborhood leaders, employers and others with a stake in the educational success of Hispanic students, both traditional and nontraditional. The HSI Task Force recommends exploring the feasibility of establishing outreach centers, across the eight-county service area, with staff assigned to building community-wide relationships and facilitating access to services and programs that support educational achievement among Hispanic young people and adults.

## TRANSFER AND ENROLLMENT INITIATIVES

### COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO DEVELOP TRANSFER PATHWAYS FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS.

Research confirms that a majority of Hispanic students begin their postsecondary education at community colleges, with a stated intent to transfer to a four-year institution. But for a variety of reasons, transfer rates among Hispanic students are low.<sup>66</sup> The HSI Task Force recommends that MSU Denver enter into strategic partnerships with targeted community colleges to create transfer pathways aimed at collaboratively counseling, advising, and guiding Hispanic students into college and through baccalaureate degree attainment.



## CREATE DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS IN TARGETED MAJORS.

Dual enrollment participation has been linked to a range of positive outcomes, including increased college enrollment and persistence, greater credit accumulation, and higher college GPA.<sup>67</sup> The HSI Task Force took note of the MSU Denver Department of Nursing's "RN to BSN" program, in which community colleges and the university share responsibility for providing academic guidance, financial aid resources, mentoring, and other support, from entry at the community college through baccalaureate degree completion at MSU Denver. The task force recommends replicating the dual enrollment model in other departments as a way of increasing Hispanic enrollment, transfer rates, and degree completion in a range of majors, particularly those for which demand is strong and growing.

### EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING TRANSFER CENTERS IN AREAS BEYOND MSU DENVER'S EIGHT-COUNTY FEEDER AREA.

Given the size of Hispanic student enrollments in community colleges in southern Colorado, the HSI Task Force recommends exploring the feasibility of a transfer center in that region, staffed with a recruiter and counselor who can provide helpful guidance to students and their families. The exploratory study should include a review of the need for and availability of living arrangements for transfer students on or near the Auraria campus.



## FINANCIAL AID

### REVIEW THE STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE REQUIREMENT FOR IMPACT ON HISPANIC ENROLLMENT.

MSU Denver currently requires that all undergraduate and graduate students taking nine credit hours or more in any given semester either participate in the university-offered health insurance program or submit proof of having outside health insurance by submitting an electronic waiver compliance form by the waiver deadline for the current semester. For academic year 2015-16, the cost is \$2,662 (\$1,110 for the fall semester and \$1,552 for the spring semester), which is automatically billed to each student's tuition.<sup>68</sup> The task force was told that first-generation Hispanic students often don't understand the waiver provision and/or report that this extra cost is a barrier to access and completion. This policy should be reviewed for adverse impact on Hispanic enrollment. It should be noted that the two other higher education institutions on the Auraria campus (the University of Colorado Denver and Community College of Denver) do not require students to pay a health insurance fee.

### ENCOURAGE HISPANIC STUDENTS ENROLLED PART-TIME AT MSU DENVER TO MOVE TO FULL-TIME STATUS.

Hispanic college students are less likely than their white counterparts to be enrolled full time,<sup>69</sup> for reasons ranging from work schedules to family obligations to a lack of financial aid.<sup>70</sup> At MSU Denver, roughly 40 percent of Hispanic students enrolled in fall 2015 were attending part-time, taking on average 7.17 credits. Part-time status affects both the time and amount of money it takes for students to achieve their degrees. The HSI Task Force recommends that the university take steps to increase awareness and understanding among Hispanic students of the cost benefits, per semester and over time, of full-time enrollment. At the same time, an effort should be made to increase student aid, especially grants and need-based scholarships, to allow Hispanic students attending part-time to move to full-time status.

### SPONSOR AN ETHNICITY DECLARATION CAMPAIGN.

Several emerging HSIs across the country have conducted research showing that many Hispanic college students are reluctant to identify their ethnicity on applications and enrollment documents.<sup>71</sup> While it is not clear how many Hispanics currently enrolled in MSU Denver are not reporting their ethnicity, the task force concluded that sponsoring a campaign that encourages students to do so will further a sense of pride and belonging.

### PROVIDE EARLIER NOTIFICATION OF FINANCIAL AID AWARDS.

MSU Denver's priority deadline for submitting Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) documentation, as well as applications for the university's foundation scholarships, is March 1 for the following academic year. But students often do not receive notification of their estimated or confirmed financial-aid awards until the summer months, when they are expected to attend orientation, compared to May 1 (National College Decision Day) for many other higher education institutions. This late notification affects students' opportunities to make informed decisions about which college to attend, whether to enroll part-time or full-time, or even whether attending college is an affordable option. The HSI Task Force urgently recommends that the timing of award letters be changed to conform with the practices of other Colorado colleges and universities. This change would help potential students better understand the high value and affordability that MSU Denver provides compared to other postsecondary institutions in the state.

### REDESIGN THE FINANCIAL-AID APPLICATION PROCESS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE NEEDS OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS.

The FAFSA application, which all MSU Denver students must complete before seeking institutional aid, requires a Social Security Number or a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) identification number. Because many undocumented students who intend to enroll or are currently enrolled at MSU Denver do not have either of these numbers, the institution's Financial Aid Office recommends that students use a proxy number (e.g., 001-01-0001) to complete their applications and secure a FAFSA identification number (username and password).<sup>72</sup> As of January 2016, however, the U.S. Department of Education will no longer allow undocumented students to use proxy numbers in their FAFSA applications, which means that MSU Denver's current and prospective undocumented students will have no opportunities to apply for scholarships and other institutional aid. The HSI Task Force thus recommends replacing FAFSA with an institutional application for scholarships and other financial aid, especially for undocumented students.

### RAISE FUNDS FOR GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS.

MSU Denver's development services and resources (e.g., Office of Sponsored Research and Programs (OSRP), Advancement, and Alumni) should target grant-prospecting and donor solicitation efforts to seeking scholarship support for Hispanics and other high-need student populations. It is important that scholarship funds be made available for undocumented students to attend MSU Denver.

# ADVOCACY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

## ADVOCATE FOR STATE AND FEDERAL AID FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS.

In 2012, MSU Denver became the first postsecondary institution in the state to offer a special tuition rate for students without legal status but who had graduated from a Colorado high school. A year later, the Colorado Legislature passed the ASSET bill, which allows undocumented students to attend public colleges and universities at in-state tuition rates. MSU Denver allows all students, including DACA and ASSET-eligible students, to apply for institutional aid, but there are no opportunities for such students to apply for state (other than Colorado Opportunity Fund, or COF) aid or federal aid.

The HSI Task Force recommends that MSU Denver create a standing committee -- as part of its ongoing HSI initiative -- charged with promoting greater access to federal, state, and institutional financial aid for college students who are now prohibited from seeking such support. Specific areas of focus could include:

- Making DACA/ASSET students eligible for federal Title IV need-based funding, including loans, grants, and work-study programs
- Seeking U.S. Department of Education changes to HEA Title V grant application requirements prohibiting “foreign” students from eligibility for need-based aid under Title IV
- Urging congressional and U.S. Department of Education leaders to develop a pilot program to provide federal financial aid to eligible DACA/ASSET students, with an eye toward demonstrating how increased college access and success can benefit local communities through higher economic return on investment, along with greater civic and community engagement.

If any of these efforts were successful, opportunities would be open to many more Hispanic students, and full-time enrollments would increase at MSU Denver and other institutions across the country. Just as important, MSU Denver’s leadership and advocacy on this front would serve as a national model for higher education commitment to Hispanic access and success.

# APPENDIXES



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May 7, 2015

Dear MSU Denver Colleague:

I am inviting you to serve on an important Task Force that will continue MSU Denver’s efforts to achieve Hispanic Serving Institution status by 2018. Reaching that threshold of Hispanic enrollment to 25% will better represent the local demographics of the population in the areas we serve. It is estimated, for example, that the Hispanic K-12 student enrollment is already at least 30% throughout Colorado and will continue increasing. Second, designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education will be a Federal acknowledgment of MSU Denver’s commitment to serving underrepresented students and, as HSI status is intended to do, will provide access to exclusive grants and programs to support the entire University.

As you know, we started this effort in 2007 as an institution-wide undertaking when Latinos made up 13 percent of overall full-time equivalent enrollments. The recommendations of the initial HSI Task Force, issued in 2008, led the initial work to important programmatic strategies to increase recruitment, admissions, retention, and graduation levels of Latino students, including the Excel Pre-Collegiate Program, Master’s Degree programs, and expansion of the First Year Success Program. In addition, we aligned our HSI efforts with other institutional priorities, including the Equity in Excellence initiative, a statewide, tri-institutional collaboration to promote educational equity and increase degree completion of underrepresented racial and ethnic minority students.

Today, eight years following the work of the original HSI Task Force, Latino student enrollments are at 20 percent. That figure is over 21% if we include our current ASSET students; ensuring in-state tuition for these students, an effort MSU Denver led statewide, was a major recommendation from the initial HSI Task Force. At this juncture in our HSI efforts, and with the continued high growth of the Hispanic population, it is imperative that we intensify our efforts to increase degree attainment of underrepresented students, including Hispanics. I have asked Deputy Provost Luis Torres and Esther Rodriguez, Director of the Center for Urban Education, to work with you and other invited faculty and staff across the University to create a strategic action plan to increase Hispanic enrollment to 25% by fall 2018 and to support these students to degree attainment. Specifically, I am charging you to conduct the following tasks:

- Examine current and projected enrollment trends in three areas: 1) The K-12 pipeline and recent high school graduates; 2) Transfer and/or adult students, including military veterans and those in community colleges, trade schools, or other institutions; (3) Current students for increased retention and graduation;
- Determine needed enrollment growth of Latino students, along with a timeline, in each of the three areas;

- Identify and analyze existing MSU Denver strategies and programs underway to support enrollment growth and retention;
- Identify and analyze gaps in programs and services;
- Identify and analyze new strategies and programs;
- Based on these analyses, develop a growth plan with recommendations;
- Present the plan to me by the end of this coming fall semester.

To launch this important phase of the HSI initiative, the Co-Chairs will request your participation at a meeting to be scheduled as soon as possible. They will lay out the framework for the Task Force, provide baseline data, and create work groups to begin analyses of assigned tasks. If you are unable to participate on the task force, please let Dr. Torres or Ms. Rodriguez know as soon as possible.

I appreciate the significant expertise and effort each of you will bring to this task. Your selection is a testament to the esteem in which you are held at MSU Denver. I look forward to receiving the analysis and action plan which will move this crucial initiative forward.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Jordan, Ph.D.  
President



## HSI TASK FORCE MEMBERS, 2015

Esther Rodriguez, Director, Center for Urban Education, Co-Chair

Luis Torres, Deputy Provost, Co-Chair

### Pre-Collegiate or K-12 Pipeline:

- Myron Anderson, Associate to the President for Diversity
- Cynthia Armendariz, Director, Excel Program (Pre-Collegiate and Retention), Co-Chair Equity in Excellence Committee
- Susana Cordova, Chief of Schools Officer/Acting Superintendent, Denver Public Schools
- Vicki Leal, Interim Director of Data Management
- Hsui Ping Liu, Director, Center for Advanced STEM Education (Summer Science Scholars), Colorado Alliance for Minority Participation, Associate Professor, Biology
- Michelle Pacheco, Assistant Director, Admissions
- Ron Ramirez, Board Member, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (MSU Denver Alumni)
- Luis Rivas, Associate Professor, English, Co-PI, CAMP (College Assistance Migrant Program)
- Gabriela Rodriguez, Student, Intercultural Communications

### Transfer/Adult/Military Veterans

- Michelle Brown, Associate Director of Admissions, Nontraditional and Readmits, Veterans
- Leroy Chavez, Director, Veterans Upward Bound
- Clay Daughtrey, Associate Dean, College of Business
- Joshua Gabrielson, Assistant Director, Admissions/Transfer Services
- Rudy Gonzales, Executive Director, Servicios de la Raza
- Elizabeth Parmelee, Director, Center for Individualized Learning
- Bethy Tessema, Admissions Counselor, Office of Admissions
- Adriann Wycoff, Associate Professor, Chicano(a) Studies, Co-PI, CAMP (College Assistance Migrant Program)

### Retention of Existing MSU Denver Students

- Cynthia Baron, Associate Director, First Year Success
- Carla Castillo, Advisor, Colorado Challenge Program
- Ramon del Castillo, Chair, Associate Professor, Chicano(a) Studies
- Curtis Esquibel, Director, Denver College Attainment Network (DenverCAN)
- Cesiah Guadarrama-Trejo, Student, Political Science
- Perla Gheiler, Director, Strategic Initiatives and Outreach, Marketing and Communications
- Theresa Godinez, Associate Director, Financial Aid and Scholarships
- Sandra Haynes, Dean, College of Professional Studies
- Abigail Jimenez, Student, Biology (major), Chemistry (minor)
- Lunden MacDonald, Director, First Year Success, Co-Chair Equity in Excellence Committee
- Elizabeth Mendez Shannon, Assistant Professor, Social Work
- Mark Potter, Associate Vice President, Undergraduate Studies

### Staff and Ex-Oficio

- Ellen Boswell, Director, Office of Institutional Research
- Samantha Kalinowski, Assistant Director, Office of Institutional Research
- Stella Todd, Associate Professor, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

# INVESTMENT SCENARIOS

The following are examples of MSU Denver programs that could increase Hispanic student access, recruitment, transfer, retention, and completion. A proposed budget range is provided for each example, along with an estimate of the enrollment increase it could produce.

Title	Center for Urban Education
<b>Description</b>	The Center for Urban Education (CUE) serves as a resource to urban school districts and schools to strengthen and improve student academic achievement and college knowledge with an aim to support successful pathways to college. CUE achieves this purpose through the following initiatives: (1) 21st Century College Readiness Center out-of-school programs in nine Denver schools; (2) 9th Grade College Readiness Summer Camps: three-week camps offered at MSU Denver in June and July for Denver Public Schools (DPS) students; (3) DPS summer school credit recovery tutoring programs. CUE staff is made up of MSU Denver administrators, professors, and students.
<b>Anticipated Annual Yield Entering MSU Denver</b>	CUE serves DPS elementary (2), middle (5) and high school (6) students in federal Title I-eligible schools, with student populations that are predominately Hispanic.  Estimated 75 Hispanic students annually
<b>Proposed New Budget Range</b>	Currently grant- and contract-funded

Title	Center for Advanced STEM Education (CASE)
<b>Description</b>	The center is charged with promoting STEM learning and building a local STEM-ready talent pipeline. There are three main programs under CASE: Summer Science Institute for middle school students, Summer Science Scholars for high school students, and Colorado Alliance for Minority Participation for college students. The target of these programs is to increase the number and diversity of students entering STEM pathways. Activities focus on encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills, promoting innovation, and fostering teamwork.  CASE has partnered with Colorado Education Initiatives to host Advanced Placement Summer Institute in the last two years. CASE has access to high school students taking AP classes from 33 Colorado Legacy schools run by Colorado Education Initiatives. Unlike traditional AP students, 60% of Colorado Legacy school students are minority students and 45% are Hispanic students. CASE proposes to recruit these well-prepared minority students.
<b>Anticipated Annual Yield Entering MSU Denver</b>	25 Hispanic students
<b>Proposed New Budget Range</b>	\$30,000 for a part-time staff position to help recruit students + \$25,000 scholarships

Title	Transition Counselors
<b>Description</b>	Transition counselors would serve as liaisons between selected high schools and MSU Denver with roles to conduct strategic college outreach, and to educate and guide Hispanic students (including undocumented students) through the multiple steps in the college and financial aid applications processes. The primary purpose of transition counselors is to move students from college acceptance in the spring, stay connected with them through the summer to avoid “summer melt,” and to ensure they enroll and are attending classes, with mentoring support through the first semester of freshman year. Counselors also will facilitate transition to other campus-based support services. Institutional investments should be targeted to districts and schools in the eight-county service area that enroll a high number of Hispanic students (25 percent or more).
<b>Anticipated Annual Yield Entering MSU Denver</b>	100 Hispanic students in fall 2016
<b>Proposed New Budget Range</b>	\$244,000 per year

Title	Excel Program
<b>Description</b>	The Excel Program is made up of the Excel Pre-Collegiate Program and Excel at MSU Denver. The program begins in high school by supporting students through the college-going process and building connections with MSU Denver. As freshmen, Excel students develop peer connections, are involved in retention activities, and provided ongoing mentoring support through degree completion. Excel currently serves six schools in Adams/Brighton school districts. MSU Denver Enrollment Services staff (program director, pre-collegiate coordinator, pre-collegiate counselors, retention coordinator, and student employees) run the pre-collegiate and retention programs. To increase access and support for more students from the existing districts and schools, Excel proposes to add two retention counselors, student employees, and scholarships for new students and expanded retention services.
<b>Anticipated Annual Yield Entering MSU Denver</b>	55 new/94 retained Hispanic students in fall 2016
<b>Proposed New Budget Range</b>	Increase current budget of \$240,000 by \$132,000 per year = \$372,000 per year
<b>Expanded Services to Additional Districts/Schools</b>	Five schools in Aurora w/ five additional staff, 30 scholarships = \$441,000/\$681,000 existing program + expanded efforts in Aurora Expected yield: 75 new + 94 retained Hispanic students in fall 2016

Title	Hispanic Marketing Plan
<b>Description</b>	The marketing plan is aimed at achieving sustained growth in Hispanic student populations. The plan includes consultation with an external marketing agency that is familiar with targeted demographics to conduct marketing research and develop a plan focused on the Hispanic population, particularly recent high school graduates, adults, college transfer students, and Spanish-speaking families.
<b>Anticipated Annual Yield Entering MSU Denver</b>	Increase enrollments by 10% for recent high school graduates, transfers, adults by fall 2016 and each year thereafter
<b>Proposed New Budget Range</b>	\$50,000-\$150,000 per year

Title	Southern Colorado Transfer Center
<b>Description</b>	The regional transfer counselor in southern Colorado will serve Pueblo Community College (PCC), Pikes Peak Community College (PPCC), Lamar Community College (LCC), Otero Junior College (OJC), and Trinidad State Junior College (TSJC). A regional recruiter in Pueblo will be present in the five southern Colorado two-year colleges and be able to increase MSU Denver enrollment of Hispanic and non-Hispanic students from the current numbers.
<b>Anticipated Annual Yield Entering MSU Denver</b>	16 students (2014-15) to 48 (2017-18) to 96 (2018-19)
<b>Proposed New Budget Range</b>	\$49,000/year (salary, benefits, office supplies, travel expenses)

Title	ALANA Multicultural Center
<b>Description</b>	The ALANA (African/African American, Latino/Latina, Asian/Asian American, and Native American/Indigenous Students) Multicultural Center will serve as a hub for students of color on the MSU Denver campus. The center will provide educational opportunities, forums, training and development, advocacy, and supportive services, as well as link students to other resources and services on campus. The center will be grounded in the celebration and affirmation of cultural identity, illuminating the diversity of our campus for the recruitment of potential students, and cultivating a sense of community and belonging for the retention of continuing students.
<b>Anticipated Annual Yield Entering MSU Denver</b>	Estimated to impact a minimum of 500 students annually
<b>Proposed New Budget Range</b>	\$316,130 annually (base salary and benefits for a director; four coordinators addressing each of the four racial/cultural categories, recognizing the need for both intra- and inter- cultural exchange; and a student program coordinator)

Title	Pilot Program: Pell Grant Support to DACA/CO ASSET Students
<b>Description</b>	The proposed pilot program would ask the U.S. Department of Education to award Pell Grants to Colorado ASSET/DACA students who have DACA certification (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) allowing students to secure an Employment Authorization Card, with a temporary Social Security Number to pay taxes and file returns. Precedents exist for such pilot programs; "under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (the HEA)... under the Experimental Sites Initiative (ESI)... the Secretary has authority to grant waivers from certain Title IV HEA statutory or regulatory requirements to allow a limited number of institutions to participate in experiments to test alternative methods for administering the title IV HEA programs" (see <a href="http://federalregister.gov/a/2015-18994">http://federalregister.gov/a/2015-18994</a> ). Such a Pell Grant pilot program, for fall 2016 and beyond, could provide a maximum of \$5,775 for an academic year (\$2,888/semester), if there is no Estimated Family Contribution (EFC), for a 12-credit load. Pilot programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education establish criteria and study outcomes. Criteria for selecting participants could include evidence of no legal infractions, a high school GPA predictive of academic success, community engagement at MSU Denver or off campus, a full-time class load at MSU Denver, and participation in MSU Denver's Immigrant Services program. Outcomes to be studied could include evidence of increased full-time status and retention, impact on GPAs, progress toward graduation, and enhanced options for selecting academic majors.
<b>Anticipated Annual Yield Entering MSU Denver</b>	MSU Denver saw an increase in ASSET student enrollment from fall 2014 (326 students) to fall 2015 (359 students). This increase of 33 students from one year to the next was without federal financial aid being available. Therefore, it is believed that an estimated increase of at least 50 additional students would occur if federal Pell Grants were to be available.  In addition, in fall 2015, MSU Denver's ASSET students are at 51.8% full-time, vs. 61.2% for the university as a whole, with no Pell Grant availability. Therefore, expected increase with Pell from part-time to full-time of at least 10%, for ASSET students to mirror the university average of 61.2%.
<b>Proposed New Budget Range</b>	In-kind contribution from MSU Denver to conduct extensive advocacy with Colorado Congressional representatives and U.S. Department of Education personnel Request support of \$5,000 for travel for MSU personnel

Title	Adult Student Services Center
<b>Description</b>	The Adult Student Services Center will serve all adult students in need of support services, with a profile and staff welcoming to Hispanic students. A full-time staff person with a background in adult learning would staff the center, provide professional development on adult learning to other offices, and have clear lines of communication with point persons in key offices.
<b>Anticipated Annual Yield Entering MSU Denver</b>	Approximately 50 students each year in recruitment and retention. This would be counted in two ways: contacts from adult students not yet enrolled at MSU Denver who subsequently enroll (within a 12-month period) and currently enrolled students who contact the center and indicate on a service feedback form that they have been considering leaving MSU Denver, but who are then subsequently retained (for at least two additional semesters or successfully graduated).
<b>Proposed New Budget Range</b>	\$55,000 annually (base-funded 1 full-time employee, operating funds)





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