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## **New Program Launched to Increase Latino College Graduation Rates in the Triangle** *Lumina Foundation's \$7.2 Million Initiative Supports Efforts in North Carolina, 9 Other States*

DURHAM – With a \$600,000 grant from Lumina Foundation for Education, a partnership of community organizations, educators, and funders has launched a four-year effort to increase the number of Latino students completing college in three counties in North Carolina's Research Triangle region. The project, "Triangle for Latino Student Success," is led by the Adelante Education Coalition, a statewide alliance of community and education organizations, and Hispanics in Philanthropy, a national network of funders working to strengthen Latino communities.

The program is part of Lumina Foundation's \$7.2 million national initiative to strengthen ventures in key metropolitan areas that show promise in improving the postsecondary attainment of Latino students. Latinos are the fastest-growing student population in the U.S. and in North Carolina.

"These types of partnerships are vitally important to helping the United States remain economically competitive," says Juan Sepúlveda, director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. "Over the last decade, we've gone from having the highest proportion of college-educated workers to now being ranked 10<sup>th</sup>. Reaching world-class levels of college attainment will require us to find ways to assure that dramatically more students have the opportunity to succeed in higher education."

Lumina Foundation seeks to do just that through a national Goal 2025 movement that aims to increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025.

At more than 50 million, Latinos represent the largest and fastest-growing population group in the United States. By 2025, half of the nation's workers will be of Latino descent. At that time, 63 percent of all jobs in the United States will require some form of postsecondary education or training, according to labor economist Anthony Carnevale of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

"For North Carolina to thrive, all students must have a pathway to success," said Leslie Winner, executive director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. "As our Latino population grows, it is imperative to build a realistic pathway for Latino students to higher education. This is an opportunity for North Carolina educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and funders to build that pathway."

"Currently, Latinos make up about 13 percent of our high schoolers, but only three percent of our college students," said Andrew Behnke, an assistant professor at NC State. "This project is an important opportunity for high schools, communities, and higher education institutions to work together to close that gap."

The Triangle for Latino Student Success Project will use several strategies to increase educational attainment of Latino students in the program's targeted region, which is made up of Wake, Durham, and Johnston counties:

- Develop a coordinated system to provide year-round after-school college preparation and leadership development for high school students and their families
- Provide one-on-one mentorship and support for college students
- Provide professional training for educators to provide school administrators and teachers with better knowledge of the Hispanic student population and the factors that interfere with their educational performance
- Create a regional system for measuring and monitoring Latino student success, including specific numerical goals for increasing high school graduation rates, college entry rates, and college completion rates for Latino students
- Advocate for state, local, and institutional policies that promote Latino student success

These coordinated programs will provide direct services to more than 2,000 students and families. “I can’t describe how vital these services will be for the Latino students and families we see every day,” said Pilar Rocha-Goldberg, president and CEO of El Centro Hispano. “So many Latino young people have the dream of one day going to college. This project will help us give them the support they need to make that dream a reality.”

Melinda Wiggins, executive director of Student Action with Farmworkers, the coordinating partner of the Adelante Coalition, said that the Coalition has been working for more than eight years to increase access to higher education for Latino students across North Carolina. “It’s great to have national partners like Lumina Foundation and Hispanics in Philanthropy,” she said, “to help give us the resources, training, and tools to work more deeply in a concentrated area to show real impact.”

Hispanics in Philanthropy has several offices across the U.S. and nearly a decade-long history of working in North Carolina. “Our work in North Carolina is one of our great success stories,” said Diana Campoamor, president of the transnational network of donors. “In collaboration with local funding partners, we’ve made more than \$4 million in grants to help strengthen the capacity of 55 Latino-serving nonprofits in the state. This project is a natural next step for our work in North Carolina, where we feel we can make a real difference in the area of education—one of the top priorities for Latino communities and for many funders, both locally and nationally.”

Lumina Foundation views its efforts to strengthen Latino educational success as integral to its broader goal of increasing the number of Americans with an advanced degree. “Latinos are emblematic of today’s 21<sup>st</sup> century student,” said Lumina President and CEO [Jamie Merisotis](#). “They are largely first-generation college students — many of whom are working adults, with family responsibilities who oftentimes begin their postsecondary education in community colleges. Increasing the access and degree attainment rates of Latinos is critical, and our hope is that Latino Student Success will provide catalytic support that can have a positive impact on making all 21<sup>st</sup> century students more successful.”

Lumina Foundation’s multi-million dollar initiative is providing support to eleven similar partnerships in nine states, all of them bringing together educational institutions, community leaders, businesses, and policymakers to develop cross-cutting, coordinated efforts to increase Latino student success. The array of services supported by the initiative include training in financial literacy, help with K12-to-college transfer and transition issues, and improved developmental courses designed to move students more efficiently toward credit-bearing courses.

The other regions receiving funding from Lumina’s initiative are Phoenix, Arizona; Long Beach, California; Santa Ana, California; Miami, Florida; Savannah, Georgia; Kentucky; Albuquerque, New Mexico; New York, New York; Memphis, Tennessee; San Antonio, Texas; and Southwest Texas.

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**About Adelante Education Coalition:** Adelante was formed in 2003 to expand educational access for Latino and migrant youth. The Coalition includes twelve core members and eight advisory members, encompassing a diverse range of Latino community-based organizations, university programs, K-12 programs, a professional society, and policy organizations. Collectively, the members of Adelante provide direct educational services to approximately 4,700 Latino students every year. For more information, visit [www.adelantenc.org](http://www.adelantenc.org).

**About Hispanics in Philanthropy:** HIP is a transnational network of more than 600 grantmakers, donors, and

philanthropic leaders. Through the Funders' Collaborative for Strong Latino Communities, HIP brings together local and national funders to provide capacity-building grants that develop leadership in the Latino community and enable organizations to better serve their communities by becoming more efficient, strategic, and sustainable. Since 2000 the Collaborative has raised more than \$40 million and provided grants to more than 500 Latino nonprofits in 19 sites, including North Carolina. Since 2002, HIP and its funding partners in North Carolina have invested more than \$4.1 million to support 55 Latino-serving nonprofit organizations in the state. For more information, visit [www.hiponline.org](http://www.hiponline.org).

**About Lumina Foundation:** Lumina Foundation, an Indianapolis-based private foundation, is committed to enrolling and graduating more students from college—especially 21<sup>st</sup> century students: low-income students, students of color, first-generation students and adult learners. Lumina's goal is to increase the percentage of Americans who hold high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina pursues Goal 2025 in three ways: by identifying and supporting effective practice, through public policy advocacy, and by using our communications and convening power to build public will for change. For more information, log on to [www.luminafoundation.org](http://www.luminafoundation.org).

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