



USA Funds® is a nonprofit corporation that works to enhance postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success by providing and supporting financial and other valued services.

Education Partnerships

USA Funds advances higher-education access for Latino students

Research shows that Latinos represent the fastest-growing segment of the nation's population. Unfortunately, Latinos also have the lowest high-school- and college-completion rates of any racial or ethnic group.

USA Funds promotes postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success, and has taken steps to improve college-attendance rates for Latino students. USA Funds has awarded grants to organizations that help more members of the nation's Latino community pursue higher education.

"As we work to promote access to higher education for every deserving student, it's important to focus our resources on segments of the community that traditionally have not enjoyed the benefits of higher education," says Henry Fernandez, USA Funds executive director, access and outreach. "We're delighted to partner with these organizations to deliver dollars and direction to help Latino students reap the rewards of a college degree."

Early awareness programs

Many families need more-complete information about the value of education following high school, the range of education options available to them, and the wide availability of financial aid. Many Latino students would be first-generation college students and have unique needs.



Students and parents attend an education session presented by the Indiana Latino Institute, which USA Funds supports in an effort to bolster higher-education preparation, access and success for Latino students.



Photo by Shawn Spence

USA Funds Access to Education Scholarships help students like Kimberly Montez, of Stanford University School of Medicine, to reach their academic and professional goals. Up to half of the awards go to those who are members of ethnic-minority groups or physically disabled.

USA Funds awarded a grant to La Plaza to support its El Puente program. This program is a youth-oriented partnership that brings high-school, community and university partners together. The group aims to establish the best plan and use of resources to increase the number of central-Indiana Latino youth who graduate from high school and continue their education. The El Puente academic team plans, implements and institutionalizes strategies drawn from research on Latino education and college readiness.

Working with the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships, USA Funds has developed an early awareness curriculum geared to Latino students and their families. USA Funds Consejos is designed to inform Latino students and families about ways to prepare for, apply to and finance postsecondary education. The program, presented in the popular telenovela format, features the story of brothers Robbie and David Chavez and their family as they plan for their future. Their experiences provide a springboard for discussion and activities designed to help students and their families along the path to higher education.

Research to advance education access

USA Funds supports conferences and research papers to advance higher-education access for Latino students,

Selected grants awarded by USA Funds Jan. 1, 2007-March 31, 2007

USA Funds awards grants to advance its nonprofit mission to enhance postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success.

Scholarship America

Minneapolis

Project Scholarship Management Services Technology

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$1,768,230

Scholarship America's Scholarship Management Services division will invest in information technology that will permit it to expand and enhance its services to current and new clients.

Okolona Community Dollars for Scholars

Okolona, Miss.

Project 2007 Okolona Learning Communities Initiative

Geographic Scope Mississippi

Amount \$152,900

This chapter of Dollars for Scholars, a Scholarship America program, will strengthen the Okolona Learning Community in Mississippi. The endeavor is part of the Learning Communities Initiative, a national program spearheaded by a coalition of organizations — including USA Funds — to bolster educational achievement.

Orlando Learning Coalition Dollars for Scholars

Orlando, Fla.

Project 2007 Orlando Learning Communities Initiative

Geographic Scope Florida

Amount \$150,683

USA Funds' grant supports the Learning Communities Initiative efforts of the Washington Shores area in Orlando. Activities focus on helping youth to graduate from high school and prepare for higher-education success.

U.S. Dream Academy Inc.

Columbia, Md.

Project "Power of a Dream" Gala

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$100,000

Funding supported the U.S. Dream Academy's sixth-annual gala, to raise financial support for children of prisoners and children at risk of falling behind in school.

Arizona College Scholarship Foundation

Phoenix

Project ACSF Scholar Program

Geographic Scope Arizona

Amount \$100,000

The foundation supports access to postsecondary education by providing funding for high-potential and low-income students to attend Arizona colleges and universities. ACSF Scholars receive annual scholarships toward the cost of college attendance for four years.

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

Washington, D.C.

Project College Goal Sunday Access Campaign

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$50,000

A national public-relations campaign assists College Goal Sunday states in their local campaigns. College Goal Sunday events offer families free assistance with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, required for federal aid as well as for many state and institutional student-aid programs.

University of Nevada, Reno

Reno, Nev.

Project Dean's Future Scholars 2007

Geographic Scope Nevada

Amount \$25,000

Dean's Future Scholars encourages culturally diverse middle-school students to enter a college-readiness program, and provides support services for the students and their families each year until they graduate from high school. USA Funds' 2007 program support totals \$75,000.

Pacific Financial Aid Association

Honolulu

Project College Goal Sunday 2007

Geographic Scope Hawaii

Amount \$20,000

College Goal Sunday provides free assistance in completing the FAFSA.

The Foundation for Florida's Community Colleges

Tallahassee, Fla.

Project College Goal Sunday 2007

Geographic Scope Florida

Amount \$20,000

College Goal Sunday 2007 offers free FAFSA assistance.

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

San Antonio, Texas

Project 21st-Annual Conference,

"Championing Hispanic Higher Education Success"

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$5,000

HACU's annual conference provides a unique forum for sharing information and ideas for the best and most-promising practices in educating Hispanic students.

National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education

Silver Spring, Md.

Project 32nd National Conference on Blacks in Higher Education

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$5,000

This annual conference engages a diverse group in dialogue about critical issues of importance to blacks in higher education.

Jones High School

Orlando, Fla.

Project 2007 Junior/Senior College Tour

Geographic Scope Florida

Amount \$5,000

As a member of the Learning Communities Coalition, Jones High School provided academically strong students the opportunity to participate in a college tour.

Indiana Dollars for Scholars

Indianapolis

Project 2007 Hoosier Heroes Scholarships

Geographic Scope Indiana

Amount \$3,000

Indiana Dollars for Scholars auctioned this scholarship funding at its annual Hoosier Heroes celebration. USA Funds' total event and scholarship funding for Hoosier Heroes is \$48,000 for 2007.

Kansas Academic Decathlon

Manhattan, Kan.

Project Kansas Academic Decathlon

Geographic Scope Kansas

Amount \$2,500

The Kansas Academic Decathlon competition for high-school students encourages academic excellence and offers students an early introduction to higher education.

Hawaii Association for College Admission Counseling

Honolulu

Project National College Fair

Geographic Scope Hawaii

Amount \$2,500

The event provides 4,000 students and their families with opportunities to explore postsecondary opportunities with representatives from approximately 200 nonprofit colleges and universities.

Institute for Higher Education Policy

Washington, D.C.

Project 2007 Summer Academy, "Cultivating Access and Success for Students of Color"

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$2,500

The academy seeks to increase the success rate of students of color in postsecondary education.

Wyoming Academic Decathlon

Wheatland, Wyo.

Project Wyoming Academic Decathlon State Competition

Geographic Scope Wyoming

Amount \$2,500

This program motivates many high-school students to stay in school and go to college. Grant funds support state-competition and program-expansion expenses.

College Mentors for Kids

Indianapolis

Project Inspire 2007

Geographic Scope Indiana

Amount \$2,000

Inspire 2007 was a fund-raising event for College Mentors for Kids Inc., an organization that pairs at-risk children in grades one through four with college-student mentors on college campuses.

Education at center of USA Funds access-and-outreach leader's work

Education inspires Henry Fernandez. In his career at USA Funds, he works each day to fulfill the company's mission of increasing preparation for, access to and success in postsecondary education. As the executive director of access and outreach, Fernandez oversees the more than \$16 million that USA Funds invests annually in programs that help students achieve postsecondary-education success.

"There are many critical issues facing access to postsecondary education today," says Fernandez. "I truly believe higher education is the key to success not only for individuals, but for entire communities, and I feel strongly that the work I do at USA Funds is making a change in postsecondary-education attainment."

Photo by Cynthia Mattis Morris



Henry Fernandez, right, joins Barbara De Gortari of the University of Indianapolis at a recent National School Boards Association conference. Fernandez is a member of the board of the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township, Ind.

Fernandez's career in education includes positions such as classroom teacher, school principal, university administrator and corporate philanthropist. While working as a university administrator, he gained an understanding of the need for financial assistance and scholarships for students. His extensive background in philanthropy includes roles as program director for Lumina Foundation for Education and as director of the Peace Corps Fellows Program.

Among Fernandez's focuses at USA Funds is enhancing education access for students in ethnic-minority groups. He has received honors for his work to promote education attainment for American-Indian students. He serves on the honorary board of *Excelencia* in Education, which supports accelerated success for Latino students in higher education.

USA Funds advances higher-education access

(continued from page 1)

including the nationally recognized studies *Investing in America's Future*, *How Latinos Pay for College* and *California Policy Options*. By collaborating with organizations such as *Excelencia* in Education and the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, USA Funds is working to change the academic environment for Latino students. These conferences and papers explore the current learning conditions and the innovative programs that will help Latino students get the funding, information and preparation they need to realize their dreams of going to college.

"The public interest in TRPI's recent events has exceeded all expectations," says Kathryn Grady, TRPI director of special projects. "Sponsors like USA Funds, which make these activities accessible for the Latino community, are invaluable partners in helping us ensure these events have reach and impact, and are of the highest quality."

Financial support for students

USA Funds has awarded \$100,000 for each of the past six years to the Hispanic Scholarship Fund. This contribution complements the national

"I've known Henry for years, and he is one of the most generous professionals with whom I've had the privilege of working," says Sarita Brown, *Excelencia* in Education president. "He's enormously capable. But beyond that he truly pays attention and takes the time to get to know you, as well as the task at hand. He's a born teacher, leader and public servant, a rare combination of skills and commitments."

In addition to his work at USA Funds, Fernandez is involved in a variety of outreach activities nationally and in his community. He has served on the boards for organizations such as Grantmakers for Education and Advocates for Youth and currently serves on the boards for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund and La Plaza. He also is a member of the board for the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township, Ind.

Fernandez also performs volunteer work in the Indianapolis arts community, assisting Dance Kaleidoscope and the American Cabaret Theater. Fernandez's work with the Indiana Arts Commission included serving on the search committee for a new executive director.

"I truly believe that the work I do is creating a better community for not only my two children, but for the entire community," says Fernandez. "I want my children to see me active in the community to set an example for them, so they will do so as well as they get older." ■



Photo by George Limbach

The Hoosier Heroes recognition and scholarship program is among the initiatives in which Fernandez, right, is involved in his role overseeing USA Funds' access-and-outreach endeavors. Fernandez joined Elizabeth Feldmann, left, of Indiana Dollars for Scholars and Janice Fry of North Putnam Dollars for Scholars at the recent Hoosier Heroes celebration.

USA Funds Access to Education Scholarships® program, which awards up to half of its scholarships to students who are members of ethnic-minority groups or are physically disabled.

In addition to the national support, USA Funds has awarded grants to the Indiana Latino Institute and the Mexican Scholarship Fund of the Central Indiana Community Foundation in Indianapolis. The scholarship program aims to promote and encourage Indiana students of Mexican descent to pursue higher education. The Indiana Latino Institute Education Initiative seeks to increase the participation of Latino residents in higher-education programs offered by Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana. The grant supports outreach services to at least 300 Latinos, prompting them to apply for admission to college and supporting some of the students with scholarships.

"We want to ensure that Hispanic students overcome challenges they may face," Fernandez says, "and that educators and leaders in the academic community are prepared to meet the needs of both students and parents." ■

Focusing on Latino issues in enhancing education attainment

By Sarita Brown
President, Excelencia in Education

There is a growing recognition that to meet the country's social, economic and work-force challenges, we must improve the educational outcomes of Latino students. Today, Latinos are the second-largest racial/ethnic community in the United States, though the disparity in educational achievement between this young, heterogeneous, fast-growing group and other Americans is sobering.

In 2005 only 12 percent of Latinos 25 and older had earned a bachelor's degree, compared with more than 30 percent of all other adults. By 2025 almost one-quarter — 22 percent — of the U.S. college-age population will be Latino, a level already reached in California, Florida, New York and Texas.

Policy-makers, college officials, philanthropists and professionals in the nonprofit sector who have championed college access and success, particularly for first-generation, low-income students, are to be congratulated. Yet, even as they have focused on the underserved, their policies and efforts often have failed to adapt messages and goals to effectively reach and influence the nation's Latino population.

To improve Latino educational outcomes, we must examine data that is specific to Latino student performance, and strategies and models that work for Latino students and their families. These strategies and models are hard to find and have never been widely shared across institutions and the policy world. To help meet this challenge, we launched *Excelencia in Education* in 2004 as a source of information for practical solutions to support accelerated success for Latino students in higher education.

Excelencia looks at national data to examine the condition of education for Latino students and the performance of academic institutions and states. Our one-page fact sheets allow different communities and institutions to compare their achievement and benchmark efforts to improve educational outcomes for Latino students. We also look at critical issues such as how Latino students pay for college and what it means to serve Latino students.

Armed with this nationwide data, groups are better prepared to strategically respond to Latino college-bound students. The following characteristics apply to the majority of Latino students:

- ◇ First-generation college-goers.
- ◇ Enrolled part-time.
- ◇ Attending community colleges.
- ◇ Living off campus and commuting to college.
- ◇ Enrolled at colleges close to where they live.
- ◇ Working off campus while enrolled in college.
- ◇ Perceive college to be financially out of their reach.

Aligning programs and services to meet the needs of Latino students and the growing numbers of all students who meet these characteristics is critical for the United States to ensure the strength of our greatest resource: human capital.



Sarita Brown

To improve Latino educational outcomes, we must examine data that is specific to Latino student performance, and strategies and models that work for Latino students and their families.

The good news is that there are effective ways to address these challenges. Through our national initiative Examples of *Excelencia*, we identify, celebrate and promote programs and institutional departments that show evidence of improving educational achievement for Latino students in higher education. The initiative has recognized three programs as Examples of *Excelencia* and another 14 programs and departments as those that boost Latino enrollment, performance and graduation.

Take, for example, the 2006 Example of *Excelencia* at the baccalaureate level. In 1995 the University of Texas at El Paso, with support from the National Science Foundation, launched an effort to raise the number of Latino students who earn degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and then pursue graduate degrees in these fields. By taking a strategic approach to faculty development, outreach, curriculum reform and other priorities, UTEP's Model Institutions for Excellence had remarkable success. In 2003-2004, UTEP ranked fourth nationally in bachelor's degrees awarded to Latinos in engineering and biology, and was in the top 20 in bachelor's degrees awarded to Latinos in math and computer science. Equally important, UTEP is finding institutional support to sustain and expand these strategies.

The 2007 Examples of *Excelencia* will be announced at the *Excelencia* symposium in Los Angeles in October. Selected programs each will receive a \$5,000 award, and representatives will present workshops describing

their efforts. A compendium of the 2007 semifinalists will be available, and *Excelencia* materials will highlight their work throughout the year.

As *Excelencia* continues to identify and disseminate solutions in policy and practice, we appreciate the ongoing support from USA Funds, Lumina Foundation for Education, the Ford Foundation, Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corp. and other groups dedicated to expanding access to higher education for all Americans. *Excelencia* invites you to join our growing network of colleagues who draw from research and programs that demonstrate how targeted, aggressive strategies to improve outcomes for Latino students pay off. Together, by learning from these lessons, we will shape an agenda for action centered on serving Latino students and all students. ■

For more information

To review *Excelencia's* fact sheets and publications, including *California Policy Options to Accelerate Latino Success in Higher Education*, *How Latino Students Pay for College* and *Inventing Hispanic-Serving Institutions: The Basics*, visit www.EdExcelencia.org. USA Funds, a supporter of *California Policy Options* and *How Latino Students Pay for College*, also offers these publications on its Web site, www.usafunds.org.

To register for the *Excelencia* symposium, to be offered in cooperation with the National College Access Network, visit www.EdExcelencia.org/ncan.