



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



LATINO LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

BY THE NUMBERS

- Three participating colleges in Skagit and Snohomish Counties.
- Fifteen organizations collaborating with LLI including non-profits, economic development associations, foundations, local and state agencies, and businesses.
- \$50,000 budget for 2013-2015 funded entirely by donations and grants
- Provided 40 hours leadership training.
- Participants spent 200 hours planning and implementing group community projects.
- 25 community mentors participated.

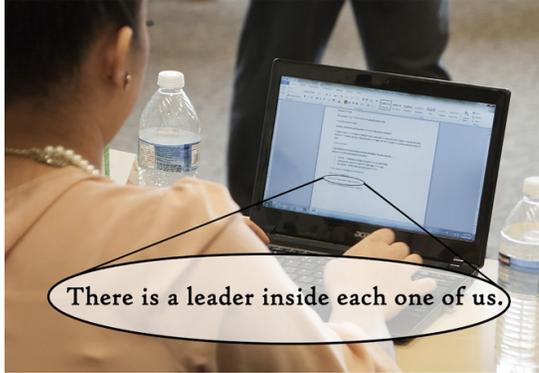
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Washington and other western states have experienced a rapid increase in their Latino populations in the past few decades. Washington's Latino population is now 12%, and they are young, averaging 24 years old (versus an average of 36 years old among the White population). Despite their population growth, younger age, and visibility, Latinos lag behind all groups in civic participation and leadership roles in Washington. For example, in 2012 their registration and participation of eligible voters was only 48%, compared with 62% for the electorate as a whole.

In addition to low election participation, Latinos are largely underrepresented in leadership at all levels, even in places where Latinos represent a large percentage or the majority of the population. Consequences of this situation may include a diminishing democracy, a lack of voices for an important and increasingly large group of people at the discussion and decision table, and feelings of alienation. Ultimately, little or no civic engagement worsens their acculturation challenges and increases the risk of discrimination, separation, and exclusion. Tensions and misunderstandings can escalate, as well as resentment, hostility, animosity, and sometimes even hate crimes.

RESPONSE

To combat this gap in Latino civic engagement in our communities, Washington State University Extension's Latino Community Studies and Outreach Program partnered with three community colleges, the Latino Educational Training Institute, and other non-profit organizations. Together, they launched a new program called "Latino Leadership Initiative" (LLI) in 2012. LLI provides multicultural leadership training that targets Latino college students with an emphasis on multicultural skills and the Latino culture. LLI participants meet with trainers and seasoned leaders once a month for hands-on learning during an academic-year-long program. Students design and implement a community project related to education. The community project has given LLI students the opportunity to become mentors of middle and high school Latino students and helps them better understand the value of higher education and being prepared for college.



QUOTES

“LLI has liberated me from the torment of hiding who I am, and where I came from. It has empowered me to speak and behave with new meaning. A flame was lit inside me, giving me newfound strength, courage, passion and truth. I will continue to try to ignite leadership in other people.”

“This experience has changed my life and the things I learned will stay with me from now on forward. Since this experience changed my life, I hope that I can change others' lives by teaching them what I learned from this great experience.”



IMPACTS

So far, more than 50 students have graduated from LLI and gone on to apply their leadership skills in their communities, schools, churches, and neighborhoods in Snohomish and Skagit Counties. LLI continues to receive the attention and recognition of elected officials at local and state levels, foundations, 4-year colleges, business leaders, and the media.

LLI graduates participate in a truly transformational experience beyond increasing their leadership skills. Their testimonies and involvement demonstrate how they developed higher self-esteem, and became more involved and caring about their communities and education. In two LLI focus groups, all participants indicated a commitment to complete college and increase their involvement as leaders. One student became president of the Latino/Hispanic student club at her community college, and another moved on to a four-year college and started organizing a similar student club. Another student accepted an internship with a non-profit organization where she can apply her leadership skills including event coordination and organization, public speaking, and communication with legislators. Partially due to her participation in the LLI she applied to and attended a Hispanic Latina leadership conference in Washington, D.C. This student worked for LLI and organized a major event almost entirely on her own. She indicated that she felt much more confident in her ability to accomplish the task thanks to her newly acquired skills from LLI. She went on to work for a Latina House Representative in the Washington Legislature and sees herself as potentially following the same path of political leadership.

Two LLI graduates acted as MCs for our latest gala and fundraising dinner with guests such as college presidents, non-profit leaders, and organization executive directors. Further, a middle school teacher presented testimony and shared his gratitude for LLI participants' impact on his middle school Latino students, whose behavior changed drastically from “trouble makers” to being more engaged, earning better grades, and talking about college and their futures as professionals.

These new leaders continue to work with middle and high school Latino students who receive individual mentoring to help them succeed in school and be motivated to attend college. Additionally, they work toward decreasing the dropout rate among Latinos.