

May 3, 2024

**Written Testimony of Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities**

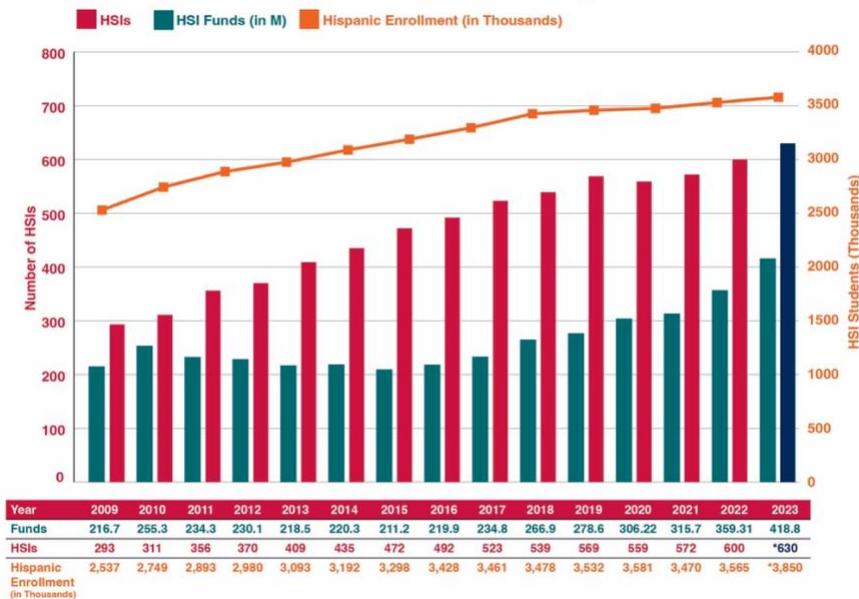
Funding Request for Hispanic-Serving Institutions: The U.S. Department of Education

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am writing on behalf of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) regarding the Fiscal Year 2025 budget considerations for the U.S. Department of Education. Our Association represents the nation’s 600 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), which collectively educate and serve more than 5 million students nationwide, including 66% of the 4 million Hispanic college students. HSIs are vital to educating a diverse and competitive workforce essential for the nation’s prosperity in the 21st century, and the U.S. Bureau of Statistics and Labor has projected that 78% of all new workers joining the American labor force in the current decade will be Hispanic.

Over the past decade, the number of HSIs has nearly doubled, reflecting the growing demographic trends of our nation. HSIs not only support the educational advancement of Hispanic students, who represent a significant population, but also serve a diverse student body including 41.4% of Asian students, 35.5% of Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander students, 24.8% of Black students, 21.7% of American Indian & Alaska Native students, and 17.5% of non-Hispanic White students in undergraduate programs across the country.

Despite their pivotal role, HSIs continue to face significant funding disparities as seen in the chart below:



To address the significant funding disparities, HACU respectfully requests increased funding for HSI-specific programs under the Higher Education Act, Part V:

- **\$350 million for Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Title V, Part A):** This program is the primary federal vehicle for targeted funding to HSIs. However, the growth of HSIs has far outpaced the funds available, leading to greater inequity in funding that must be addressed. Since 1995, DHSI grants have enabled HSIs to expand educational opportunities and improve educational attainment for Hispanic students by addressing key areas such as developing and enhancing academic programs, faculty development, infrastructure maintenance, and technology updates.
- **\$150 million for Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans (Title V, Part B):** This program supports HSIs in expanding and enhancing postbaccalaureate academic offerings and improving academic attainment among Hispanic students. Hispanics now earn 9% of all doctorates, up from 6.4% in 2014, progress that still falls short, compared to the more than 20% Hispanic enrollment overall in U.S. higher education. The current gap is likely to grow without considerable funding enhancements.

The urgency for increased funding has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which shed light on persistent and existing challenges. A 2024 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report underscores severe infrastructure needs at HSIs, including a deferred maintenance backlog averaging almost \$100 million per HSI, with 43% of building spaces needing repairs or replacement.

Many HSIs face additional technological and financial challenges in delivering hybrid education, crucial in today's learning environments. The report highlights HSIs unmet digital infrastructure needs related to internet access and connectivity, cybersecurity, and hybrid learning methods. For example, 90% of HSIs that offer hybrid courses face at least one technological or financial hardship to continue to deliver them. Education is a public good and a public investment that serves to stabilize the economy. Without these investments, more than 5 million HSI students will remain underserved and underprepared for the workforce requirements of 21st-century America.

HSIs commonly report challenges in securing funding for digital and facility infrastructure needs, including insufficient state funding and declining tuition and fees revenue towards addressing capital project. **HACU requests a new program to support the capital financing needs of the 600 HSIs across the country, which is vital and necessary for these institutions to increase capacity and deliver sufficient educational services and programs.**

Moreover, **HACU advocates for the passage of the Hispanic Educational Resources and Empowerment (HERE) Act, seeking a \$20 million allocation to initiate a pilot program at the Department of Education.** This act is crucial for bridging achievement gaps and fostering educational collaboration between PK-12 and higher education via HSIs.

The 5.2 million students at HSIs are a microcosm of America's diverse demography and represent the backbone of our emerging workforce. We are committed to working closely with the Subcommittee to support these critical investments.

Thank you for considering our request. I am ready to serve as a resource and eagerly anticipate further discussions on these vital investments.

Respectfully,

Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities