

2025 HACU Legislative Agenda



HACU

HISPANIC
ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGES &
UNIVERSITIES





HACU Governing Board 2024-2025



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Merced, California



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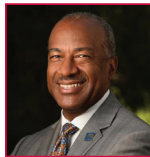
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Ex-Officio:
Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO
HACU



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Dear Colleagues:

Despite their critical role in educating a growing and underserved student population, the programs that support Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) have long been underfunded. As the number of HSIs continues to rise, federal and state investments must keep pace to adequately meet the educational needs of their growing student population.

In the 2023–24 academic year alone, the number of HSIs grew to 615, with an additional 425 institutions on the path to becoming HSIs. These institutions are far more than higher education access points—they are vibrant incubators of talent, cultivating the next generation of scientists, educators, artists, and professionals who are shaping the future of our nation.

We find ourselves at a pivotal moment. We must both advocate for increased support for our nation's colleges and universities and protect the progress we've already achieved. America's HSIs are at the forefront of this effort, preparing many low-income and first-generation college students from all backgrounds for success in a dynamic, rapidly evolving global landscape. Meeting this challenge requires a unified, collective voice calling for greater and more equitable investment in HSIs—ensuring these institutions are empowered to educate and elevate the next generation of American leaders.

Today, HSIs serve approximately 5.6 million college students—a vibrant population that is a microcosm of America. While nearly two-thirds of the country's 4 million Hispanic college students attend HSIs, these institutions also serve substantial numbers of African American, Native American, Asian American, and other students, including many non-Hispanic white students. These institutions are not only engines of educational opportunity and prosperity; they are the foundation of America's 21st-century workforce.

To fully support their students, HSIs must have expanded access to capital for infrastructure and facilities equipped with modern, cutting-edge technology that aligns with the workplace of the future. Investing in HSIs and its students is an investment in opportunity, innovation, and the economic prosperity of our nation.

HACU's Legislative Agenda champions fair and essential federal investments in HSIs, with key priorities including: increased funding for Title V Parts A and B; inclusion of Hispanic-Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities in the reauthorized Farm Bill; passage of the American Dream and Promise Act of 2025; doubling Pell Grant awards and expanding access to DACA- and TPS-eligible students; creation of a capital financing program for HSI infrastructure; and enactment of the HERE Act.

Your continued partnership in advancing student success is at the heart of our mission. We are deeply grateful for your commitment.

Sincerely,



Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO



Juan S. Muñoz
HACU Governing Board, *Chair*
Chancellor
University of California, Merced



About HACU

Founded in 1986 with 18 pioneering institutions, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) has grown into a leading national advocate for over 600 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and over 400 emerging HSIs. In 1992, HACU successfully led the effort to have HSIs recognized in federal legislation. In addition, HACU partners with Hispanic-Serving School Districts (HSSDs) across the U.S., as well as institutions in Latin America and Spain, extending its impact globally.

Although Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) represent only 20% of all institutions of higher education serving undergraduate students, they play a pivotal role as educational hubs—enrolling 5.6 million undergraduate and graduate students, or 31% of the nation's postsecondary student population.¹

These institutions offer transformative opportunities for students who face significant barriers to access and success in higher education. Through their unwavering commitment to providing access, support, and resources, HSIs are instrumental in shaping the futures of countless first-generation, low-income, and underserved students.

HACU's mission is an educational and economic imperative: to advocate for the success of first-generation, underserved, and historically underrepresented students in higher education, while ensuring that HSIs continue to thrive as dynamic engines of educational excellence. By providing access to quality education, HSIs are not only transforming the lives of millions of students and their families but are also shaping the next generation of workforce leaders—empowering them with the skills, knowledge, and resilience necessary to excel in an increasingly complex and competitive world.





Growth and Location of HSIs

Under Title III and Title V of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, an institution may be designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution if it meets certain eligibility criteria. An HSI is defined as a nonprofit institution of higher education with at least 25% Hispanic undergraduate full-time equivalent students.

For advocacy and research purposes, HACU adheres to the federal criteria outlined in Title V of the Higher Education Act. Since 2016, the U.S. Department of Education has published an official list of federally eligible HSIs, which are eligible to apply for HSI-related funding. Prior to this, HACU maintained its own list based on federal definitions, using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (IPEDS). The official list is available on the U.S. Department of Education's HSI Division website.

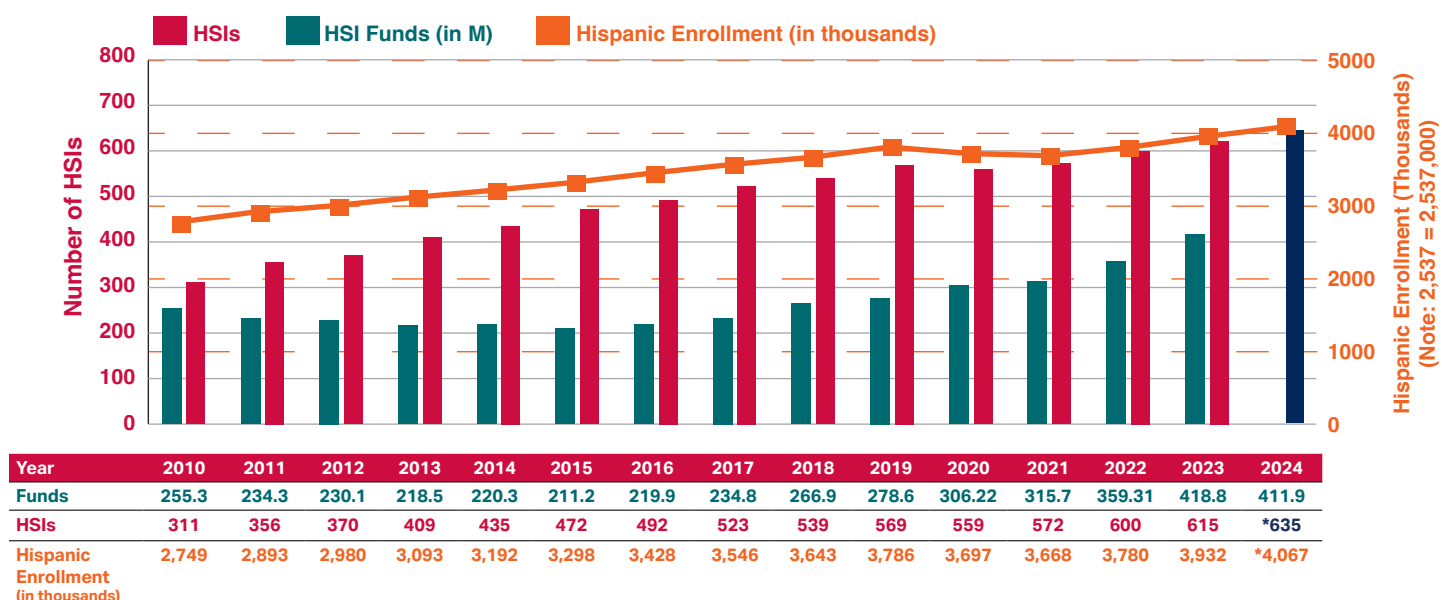
HACU recognizes nonprofit colleges and universities eligible for Title V funding (excluding for-profit institutions) under the following criteria:

- **Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs):** Institutions with Hispanic Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment of at least 25%.
- **Emerging HSIs (EHSIs):** Institutions with a Hispanic Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment between 15% and 24.99%.

In the 2023–24 academic year, the number of HSIs soared to 615, marking a 2.5% increase from the previous year and surpassing pre-pandemic levels. This growth highlights the expanding role of HSIs in advancing educational opportunities for Hispanic students across the United States. The highest concentrations of HSIs are found in California (171), Texas (112), Puerto Rico (56), Illinois (39), and New York (39).² Despite this rapid expansion, funding for HSIs has remained stagnant, unable to keep pace with their increasing numbers. As HSIs continue to grow in numbers and enrollment, the financial resources necessary to support their progress and meet the demands of their expanding student populations are sorely lacking.

The number of EHSIs has grown from 412 in 2022 to 425 in 2023—an increase of approximately 3%. These 425 EHSIs are located in 43 states, Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands. States with the highest numbers include California (43), Florida (32), New York (30), Texas (28), Massachusetts (24), Washington (23), and North Carolina (21), underscoring their growing national reach and impact.

The following page provides a map illustrating the distribution of HSIs and emerging HSIs across the nation, emphasizing the urgent need for equitable funding that aligns with this unprecedented growth.



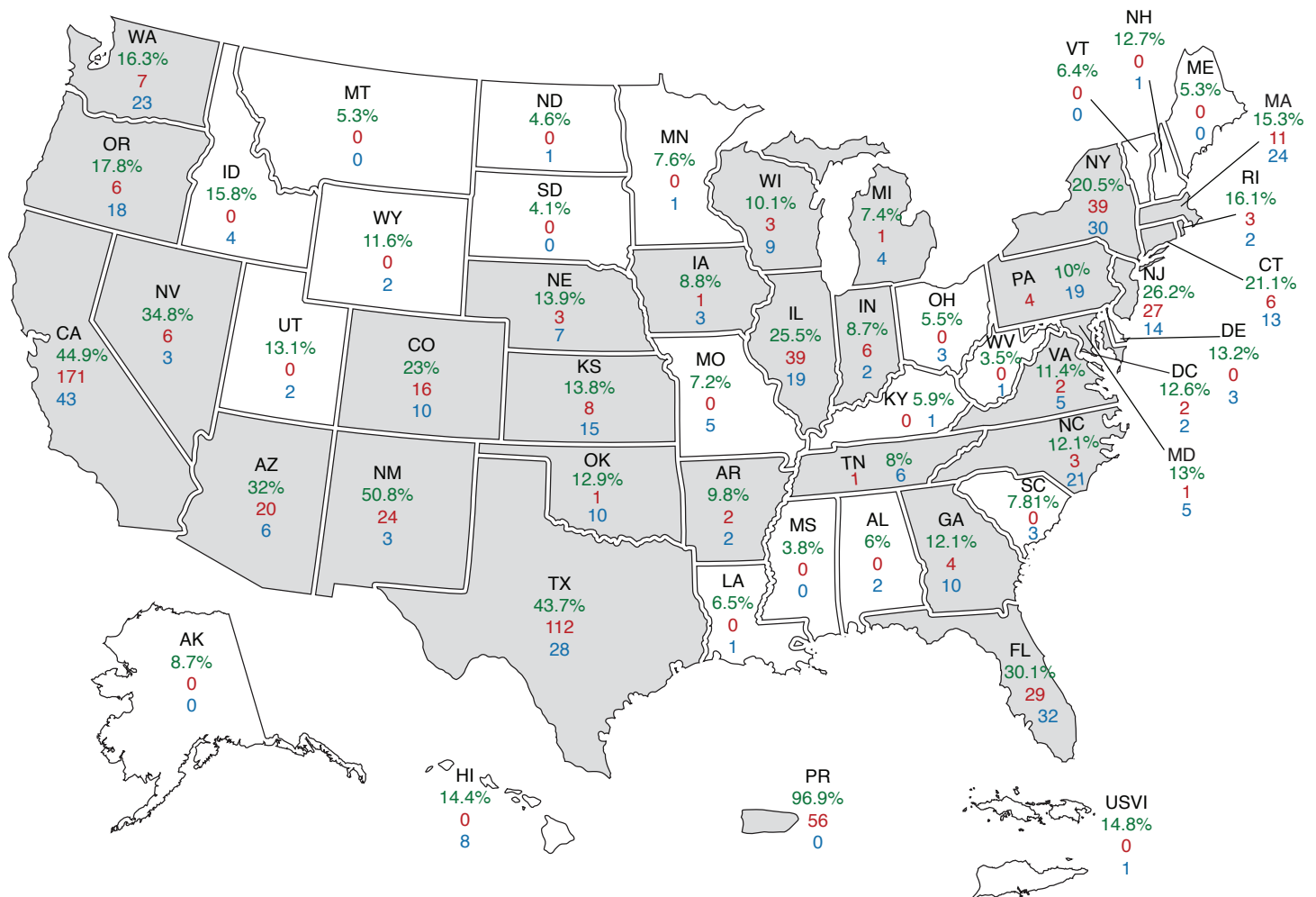
Source for Hispanic undergraduate and graduate enrollment at all institutions: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_306.30.asp.

*Note: 2024 Hispanic enrollment is projected based on NCES trends.



2023-24 Geographic Distribution

By percentage of Hispanic Undergraduate Headcount and Number of HSIs/EHSIs



Percentage of Hispanic Undergraduate Students by State Headcount

Number of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): Total 615
(25.0 % minimum Hispanic Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment)

Number of Emerging HSIs: Total 425
(15.0 - 24.99 % Hispanic FTE)

State percentages based on:

Total Undergraduate (UG) Student Headcount = 15,161,669
Total Hispanic UG Student Headcount = 3,410,860
Total Hispanic UG Student Percentage = 22.5%

Source: 2023-24 IPEDS data using Title IV eligible, 2 year & 4 year, public and private, nonprofit institutions.

Key Impacts of Hispanic-Serving Institutions

HSIs are the fastest-growing cohort of colleges and universities across the nation. In the fall of 2023, a total of 615 institutions were educating and serving 5.6 million college students from diverse backgrounds, including 3.7 million Hispanic students in higher education.³

HSIs play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the nation, educating 33% of the U.S. higher education population. With every passing year, their influence deepens as they not only expand in number and enrollment but also solidify their role in cultivating a highly skilled, future-ready workforce. These institutions are leading the way in empowering the next generation of leaders, innovators, and professionals who will fuel the growth and success of the U.S. economy.

HSIs provide a vital lifeline for students from low-income backgrounds, many of whom are first-generation college students from underserved communities. As these students become the first in their families to earn a degree, their educational success creates a transformative ripple effect that extends far beyond the classroom. HSI graduates are doing more than earning diplomas—they are breaking generational cycles of poverty, becoming trailblazers and serving as powerful role models for siblings, peers, and entire communities. Notably, 37% of Pell Grant recipients are enrolled at HSIs,⁴ underscoring the critical role these institutions play in advancing educational equity. The achievements of HSI graduates redefine what is possible for future generations, sparking lasting change within families and empowering communities to rise and thrive.

Upward Socioeconomic Mobility

In February 2020, a team of social scientists from Harvard, Berkeley, and Brown universities published a landmark study titled “Income Segregation and Intergenerational Mobility Across Colleges in the United States.”⁵ This groundbreaking and seminal study rigorously examined the impact of a college education on freshmen from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds by tracking the proportion who advanced to the top 20% of earners in their cohort after graduation. In other words, it measured those who moved from the bottom to the top. According to 2024 Social Mobility Index (SMI) developed by CollegeNET, Inc., 8 of the top 10 institutions with the highest upward mobility rates—out of thousands of colleges and universities nationwide—were HSIs.⁶ This compelling evidence highlights the powerful socioeconomic impact HSIs have on underserved students, transforming their futures and driving upward mobility.

Top Institutions Ranked with the Highest Socioeconomic Mobility Rate

Rank	Institution
1.	CUNY Baruch College *
2.	California State University-San Marcos *
3.	CUNY Lehman College *
4.	Winston-Salem State University
5.	CUNY City College *
6.	California State University-Dominguez Hills *
7.	Old Dominion University
8.	California State University-Los Angeles *
9.	California State University-Long Beach *
10.	California State University-Bakersfield*
* Hispanic-Serving Institutions	

To further support these findings, a more recent report released by Rutgers Center for Minority-Serving Institutions found that HSIs demonstrate higher mobility rates than Predominantly White Institutions (PWI).⁷ HSIs accomplish more with fewer resources as compared to PWIs.



Return on Investment of Degree Attainment

In 2022, the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University published *“The Colleges Where Low-Income Students Get the Highest ROI.”*⁸ This report analyzes the return on investment (ROI) for low-income students across various colleges and universities, ranking them based on educational and economic outcomes. ROI is determined by comparing the earnings of graduates from each institution to the costs of attending, providing a clear picture of how well these colleges help low-income students succeed financially.

Top Public Institutions with a Median Share (36%) or Greater of Pell Grantees (PG)

Rank	Institution	Percent of Pell Grant Students
1	University of California-San Diego	36
2	University of California-Davis*	38
3	University of California-Irvine	42
4	CUNY Baruch College	48
5	Augusta University*	40
6	San Jose State University	43
7	University of Illinois at Chicago	53
8	University of Houston	40
9	Cal State Polytechnic University-Pomona	49
10	University of California-Santa Barbara	37

*Non-HSI

HSIs also show a strong return on investment (ROI) for Pell Grant recipients, similar to their impact on socioeconomic mobility for low-income students. The table above highlights this, showing that eight of the top 10 public institutions in the U.S. with the highest ROI are HSIs.

The transformational power of HSIs for low-income and underserved populations throughout the nation merits greater support from government and the private sector. Despite facing severe underfunding, HSIs are consistently outperforming other colleges and universities in educating and preparing the next generation of skilled workers—many of whom will form the backbone of the U.S. labor force. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Hispanic workers are projected to account for an astounding 78% of all new entrants into the U.S. workforce from 2020 to 2030. In this context, HSIs are not merely important—they are vital to the economic and social advancement of our nation. By educating and training the future of our workforce, HSIs lay the foundation for a more prosperous and competitive country. Their contributions are indispensable to shaping the future of America’s economy.



HACU's Appropriations Requests for the 119th Congress

HACU calls for equitable funding for HSIs to meet the growing demands of over 5.6 million students, including 3.7 million Hispanic undergraduate and graduate students. Federal agencies—such as the U.S. Departments of Education, Agriculture, Commerce, and the National Science Foundation—must commit dedicated resources to HSIs to expand access to education, advance research, and strengthen workforce development. The following are HACU's key funding priorities:

Department of Education

- **\$350 million** for Title V, Part A – Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (DHSI) Program
- **\$150 million** for Title V, Part B – Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans
- **\$40 million** for the Hawkins Centers of Excellence
- **\$5 million** for Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success at HSIs
- **\$2 billion** for TRIO programs to expand educational access and support services for students with financial need
- **Double the Pell Grant** award and extend eligibility to DACA and TPS students

Department of Agriculture

- **\$100 million** for the USDA Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program
- Hispanic-Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs) Programs:
 - **\$100 million** for the HSACU Endowment Program
 - **\$40 million** for the HSACU Equity Grants Program
 - **\$80 million** for the HSACU Institutional Capacity-Building Grant Program
 - **\$80 million** for the HSACU Basic and Applied Research Grant Program
 - **\$80 million** for the Natural Resources Leadership Program
 - **\$80 million** for the HSACU Extension Grants
 - **\$30 million** for HSACU Training Hispanic Agricultural Workers Grants
- **Create 12 Land Grant HSACUs** and authorize annual funding for capacity-building grants with state-matching funds:
 - **\$180 million** for Extension Capacity Grants
 - **\$210 million** for Research Capacity Grants
 - **\$72 million** to enhance institutional capacity in food and agricultural sciences
 - **30 million** for student scholarships in agriculture and food sciences

National Science Foundation

- **\$115 million** for NSF HSI Grant support HSIs in STEM research, curriculum development, infrastructure, and workforce training



HACU's Top Federal Priorities

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Increase Authorization Levels for Title V, Part A and Title V, Part B

HACU urgently calls on Congress to increase the authorization levels for Title V, Part A and Title V, Part B of the Higher Education Act. As the primary source of federal funding for HSIs, Title V remains a critical lifeline for these institutions. However, the rapid growth of HSIs has far outpaced the funding available, leaving many institutions struggling to meet the demands of their expanding student populations. To ensure HSIs can continue to serve and empower these students, it is critical that Congress acts to secure the necessary resources.

Title V, Part A (Undergraduate Education) funds are essential to the success of HSIs, providing the resources needed to purchase critical laboratory equipment, build necessary instructional facilities, support faculty development, and deliver vital student services such as tutoring, counseling, outreach, mentoring, and fellowships. These investments are not just expenditures—they are the building blocks that empower HSIs to serve students, many of whom come from underserved, first-generation, and low-income backgrounds. Without these resources, HSIs would struggle to meet the needs of the students who depend on them to succeed academically and professionally.

Title V, Part B (Graduate Education) funding further strengthens HSIs by expanding postbaccalaureate academic offerings and improving program quality in institutions that serve the majority of students in underserved communities. This funding is vital for empowering low-income and underserved students to complete their graduate degrees, equipping them with the advanced skills and expertise necessary to drive innovation, fuel scientific discovery, and strengthen our nation's workforce. By investing in graduate education, we ensure that these students are prepared to tackle the challenges of tomorrow and contribute to the advancement of knowledge and technology that will shape the future.

Without funding that matches the rapid growth of HSIs, these institutions will continue to face severe financial constraints, limiting their ability to fully support their students. This funding disparity will directly hinder the education of our nation's future leaders, innovators, and workforce. **Congress must take immediate action to ensure HSIs receive the resources necessary to fulfill their critical role in shaping the next generation of skilled professionals and engaged citizens. The future of our nation depends on it.**





Capital Financing Bill

HACU calls on Congress to urgently establish an HSIs Capital Financing Program as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), ensuring that HSIs receive the support they need to thrive in the 21st century. The program's primary goal is to provide federally guaranteed loans at zero to nominal interest rates, offering critical access to capital for infrastructure improvements that will directly impact students, faculty, and the broader academic community.

The need for this program cannot be overstated. Across the nation, HSIs are facing severe challenges when it comes to maintaining and upgrading their facilities. A recent GAO report revealed that nearly 43% of HSI buildings require significant repairs, with an average deferred maintenance backlog approaching \$100 million. Deferred maintenance backlogs, damage from natural disasters or severe weather, and facility modernization efforts drive HSIs facility needs. In fact, 77% of HSIs have at least one deferred maintenance project that addresses a health or safety issue.⁹ These issues are not just numbers—they represent real challenges that hinder the ability of these institutions to provide quality education, research, and resources for their students.

HSIs are in dire need of resources for upgrading classrooms, research labs, instructional equipment, and research instrumentation — critical components that foster a vibrant and cutting-edge academic environment. The lack of up-to-date facilities and resources puts students at a disadvantage, preventing them from gaining the full benefits of a modern education and limiting their ability to contribute to innovation and progress in their fields.

Investing in the physical infrastructure of HSIs is an investment in the future of higher education, and in economic competitiveness. Ensuring that these institutions are equipped with state-of-the-art classrooms and labs will directly translate into a more highly skilled workforce, driving innovation and growth across the nation.

By establishing a Capital Financing Program for HSIs, similar to the capital outlay financing for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Congress will ensure that these institutions can make necessary infrastructure improvements without the burden of exorbitant costs. This program will empower HSIs to modernize their campuses, enhance student learning experiences, and prepare their graduates to contribute meaningfully to our economy and society.

Pell Grant Award

HACU endorses the maximum Pell Grant award. The Pell Grant is a fundamental pillar of financial support for millions of low-income students striving to achieve a college education.

As the most essential tool in the federal student aid system, the Pell Grant helps level the playing field, making college more accessible and affordable for those who need it the most. With over 7 million students relying on Pell Grants to cover tuition, books, housing, food, and other essential college expenses, it is clear that this grant plays a pivotal role in ensuring students can not only attend but also succeed in higher education.

Historically, the Pell Grant has not kept up with the skyrocketing costs of higher education. Currently, the maximum Pell Grant only covers between 13% to 30% of the total cost for tuition, fees, housing, and food at many institutions, leaving students with a significant gap in funding.¹⁰ This shortfall forces many to struggle with essential living expenses, putting their education—and futures—at risk. To address this critical issue, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities is calling on Congress to double the Pell Grant to \$13,000. This increase is not just necessary; it is urgent. Doubling the Pell Grant would help students better manage the rising costs of living and inflation, ensuring that they can focus on their studies without the constant financial strain that too often derails their educational aspirations.

Doubling the Pell Grant is not just an investment in individual students; it's an investment in our nation's economic future. As the National Bureau of Economic Research shows, Pell recipients repay taxpayers' investments in just ten years through higher graduation rates, better employment outcomes, and increased earnings. These higher earnings lead to greater tax contributions, driving economic growth and benefiting the nation as a whole.¹¹

HSIs enroll 38% of all Pell recipients, serving some of the most financially vulnerable students in the country. By boosting Pell funding, we empower these institutions to cultivate the next generation of skilled leaders and professionals, strengthening the United States' global competitiveness. Doubling the Pell Grant is crucial—not only to help low-income students but to build a more innovative, robust economy where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.



Title IV (HEA) – College Access and Readiness Programs

- 80 million for HEP-CAMP (High School Equivalency and College Assistance Migrant Program) to expand access for migrant and seasonal farmworkers.
- \$410 million for GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) to support low-income students' college readiness.
- \$2.0 billion for TRIO programs to expand access and retention for low-income, first-generation students.

Hispanic Educational Resources and Empowerment (HERE) Act

HACU strongly supports the HERE Act, authored by Congressman Joaquin Castro and Senator Alex Padilla, as a crucial step toward bridging the gap between K-12 education and postsecondary opportunities for Latino students. This groundbreaking legislation will establish a new HSI-designated program that fosters meaningful partnerships and collaborations between HSIs and Hispanic-Serving School Districts (HSSDs). The HERE Act will provide vital funding to support initiatives that connect these institutions and enhance the postsecondary educational attainment of Latino students. This targeted effort will ensure that Latino students are not only prepared for higher education but also have the resources and support they need to succeed in their academic and professional careers. Specifically, the HERE Act funding would be used for the following activities:

- **Create** a college-going culture by promoting early exposure for students and their families to the opportunities and requirements of postsecondary education.
- **Improve** school-based and institutional practices to better prepare students for postsecondary education and provide high-quality support systems.
- **Support** students through the college application process.
- **Address** non-academic barriers to college enrollment, persistence, and completion.
- **Develop** programs that encourage students to pursue teaching as a profession.

The HERE Act represents a transformative opportunity to strengthen the educational pipeline and create lasting opportunities for Latino communities across the nation.

Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success at HSIs

Title VIII, Part T of the Higher Education Act established competitive opportunities for Institutions of Higher Education and created support programs known as Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success.

HACU supports the creation of Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success at HSIs. The Minority Veterans Report (November 2020), published by the National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics and the Department of Veterans Affairs, shows that Hispanic representation in the military continues to grow, and the number of Hispanic veterans will increase significantly in the coming years.

As part of the FY2026 appropriations, **HACU recommends launching a new grant program to create and sustain Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success at HSIs.** HSIs serve a growing veteran population and play a key role in expanding educational access and career opportunities. This grant would fund support programs that help veterans transition successfully into higher education and the workforce.



Teacher Preparation

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), originally enacted in 1965, was reauthorized by the 114th Congress as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. As of 2024, public secondary school enrollment in the United States totaled 49.6 million students, with 45% identifying as White, 29% as Hispanic, and 15% as Black.¹² Hispanic students experienced the most notable growth, accounting for 29.3% of the K–12 population—a figure that surpasses their 22% share of the overall U.S. population.¹³

This demographic shift has been accompanied by a rise in the English Learner (EL) population, which increased from 9.4% in 2011 to 10.6% in 2021. The demand for highly skilled and bilingual educators has surged in response, particularly in schools with high concentrations of EL students. This surge occurs amid a nationwide teacher shortage, an annual teacher attrition rate of 8%, with 31% of schools struggling to fill positions—especially in STEM, bilingual education, and special education.¹⁴

HSIs play a critical role in the national educator shortage. With their deep ties to diverse communities, HSIs are uniquely positioned to cultivate a teaching workforce that is both representative of the student population and responsive to the evolving needs of today's classrooms.

HACU recommends:

- **Expanding the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP)** by amending Title II, Part A of the Higher Education Act to increase funding for the TQP Program, with dedicated support for teacher preparation programs at HSIs and to increase the number of educators qualified to support specialized student needs.
- **Supporting Digital Learning and Virtual Education Training for Educators** by authorizing a competitive grant program for two-year and four-year HSIs to train and upskill educators in digital instruction methods to effectively support hybrid and virtual learning models. Expand access to technology integration training to ensure educators are equipped to teach STEM, online learning, and other specialized courses effectively.
- **Expanding Professional Development for Leadership Training** by authorizing a competitive grant program for HSIs to train school principals and administrators with instructional leadership skills to better serve evolving educational needs.
- **Investing and Expanding Professional Development for STEM Educators at HSIs** by increasing federal investment in STEM-focused teacher training programs to expand access to STEM courses and career pathways.
- **Investing in an Education Workforce Stabilization Fund** by supporting state and district efforts to stabilize their educator workforce by investing \$345 billion in an Education Stabilization Fund, including \$175 billion for K-12 schools and \$132 billion for Schools of Education at HBCUs, TCUs, HSIs and other MSIs.
- **Authorizing a competitive grant** program to enhance and expand programs that equip graduates with the ability to work with linguistically diverse students to address the needs of English Language Learners in K-12 education and expose students to college opportunities and career options.
- **Strengthening Pathways for Internationally Trained Teachers** by authorizing a competitive grant program to retrain certified teachers from other countries to teach in U.S. schools. This program would help address the shortage of highly qualified bilingual teachers in states such as California, Texas, Arizona, New York, Florida, and Illinois.



Hawkins Centers of Excellence

The Hawkins Centers for Excellence Program, authorized in the 2008 Higher Education and Opportunity Act, is designed to increase the number of effective educators by expanding and reforming teacher education programs. If funded, the Hawkins Centers of Excellence program would make competitive grants of at least \$500,000 annually for up to five years, to eligible MSIs to establish Centers of Excellence in teacher education. Increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in high-need schools is key to closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

HACU requests an appropriation of \$40 million for the Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program to expand teacher preparation at MSIs.

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Improving Undergraduate STEM Education: HSI Program

The U.S. workforce depends on STEM talent. HSIs are well-positioned to build targeted STEM programs to address workforce needs.

HACU requests \$115 million to support HSIs in STEM research, curriculum development, infrastructure, and workforce training.

The CHIPS and Science Act

The CHIPS and Science Act (2022) allocates \$280 billion for semiconductor production, R&D, and STEM workforce development, including \$80 billion for NSF through FY 2027. The Act directs NSF to award grants to MSIs to expand research capacity and create five MSI Centers of Innovation.

HACU urges Congress to ensure HSIs receive equitable access to STEM workforce development programs under CHIPS funding.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

HACU strongly urges the U.S. Congress to prioritize the equitable strengthening of HSIs and Hispanic-Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs) through the reauthorization of the Farm Bill. It is critical that these institutions receive the necessary support to develop higher education programs that attract, retain, and graduate students who are well-prepared to join the competitive workforce in the nation's food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences sectors. Furthermore, HACU proposes the establishment of a new category for HSACUs as Land Grant institutions within the Farm Bill, recognizing their vital role in advancing the future of agriculture and related fields for underserved communities.

HACU Requests:

- USDA Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program: \$100 million under the Farm Bill
 - Create a New "Land Grant HSACU" Category
 - 12 designated Land Grant HSACUs in AZ, CA, CO, FL, IL, NJ, NM, NY, TX, PR
 - \$180 million for Extension Capacity Grants
 - \$210 million for Research Capacity Grants
 - \$72 million for institutional capacity in food and agricultural sciences
 - \$30 million for student scholarships in agriculture and food sciences
- Farm Bill Program Appropriations for HSACUs
 - \$100 million – HSACU Endowment Program
 - \$40 million – HSACU Equity Grants Program
 - \$80 million – HSACU Institutional Capacity-Building Grant Program
 - \$80 million – HSACU Basic and Applied Research Grant Program
 - \$80 million – Natural Resources Leadership Program
 - \$80 million – HSACU Extension Grants
 - \$30 million – HSACU Training Hispanic Agricultural Workers Grants



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

With HSIs enrolling 3.7 million Hispanic undergraduate students and graduate students, they provide access to a large and vital population of students who can be engaged in healthcare workforce training.

HACU Requests:

- **\$20 million** – Faculty Development, Research, and Capacity-Building Program (Title VII, HRSA)
- **\$20 million** – Loan Forgiveness for Hispanic Healthcare Graduates working in Hispanic communities
- **\$10 million** – Credentialed “Promotoras de Salud” Pilot Program at an HSI

Eliminating Health Disparities

- **\$20 million** – NIH-HSI Partnership for Health Disparities Research
- **\$20 million** – Training Healthcare Workers for Hispanic Community Initiatives
- **\$20 million** – Expanding Healthcare Professions Programs at HSIs
- **\$20 million** – Establishing Five HSI Centers of Excellence for Health Disparities Research

Medical Education for Underserved Populations (MedUP)

Historically underserved populations—including low-income individuals, immigrants, rural communities, and first-generation Americans—have long been underrepresented in medical education and training. This disparity is not just a matter of access; it directly impacts the future of healthcare, as the low participation rates from these groups contribute to a critical shortage of physicians who are equipped to serve their own communities. The absence of diverse voices and experiences in the medical field leaves entire populations without adequate representation in their healthcare providers. To address this gap, we urgently need a coordinated, national initiative to build a strong, inclusive pipeline of medical professionals from all backgrounds—ensuring that future generations of doctors reflect the communities they serve, and that no one is left behind in the quest for quality healthcare.

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) reports the following two key findings.¹⁵

- Physician demand is projected to grow faster than supply under the most likely scenarios, leading to a total projected shortage of between 13,500 and 86,000 physicians by 2036.
- If communities historically underserved by our health care system had fewer access barriers, the nation would have needed approximately 117,100 to 202,800 more physicians as of 2021 to achieve comparable access for all. This is approximately three to six times the magnitude of current shortfall estimates.

HSIs are uniquely positioned to spearhead a national initiative that prepares the next generation of physicians to meet the growing healthcare needs of underserved communities facing severe health disparities. This initiative will be grounded in proven strategies, offering high-quality pre-medical curricula and comprehensive support to ensure successful admission to medical schools. In addition, it will provide essential co-curricular programs and services—both online and in person—to help students complete their degrees and residency programs.

We will also build partnerships with accredited medical schools abroad, giving American pre-medical students the opportunity to become bilingual, bicultural physicians. These students will be supported through their journey, from passing medical board exams to completing their residency in the U.S.

HACU, representing all HSIs, will collaborate with medical schools and key organizations such as the AAMC, American Hospital Association, and American Medical Association to ensure success.

HACU urges the U.S. Congress—especially Senate and House committees overseeing medical education and funding—to support this initiative with permanent and sustainable funding and fast-track the necessary legislation.



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

HACU urgently advocates for the creation of a permanent, sustainable funding stream to address the widening broadband inequities that have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These inequities not only continue to create insurmountable barriers for HSIs but also hinder their ability to compete for critical grants on an even playing field. The digital divide is no longer a distant issue — it is an ongoing crisis that directly impacts students and institutions, leaving entire communities at a disadvantage.

According to the latest GAO report, nearly one-third of HSIs are facing the harsh reality that more than 10% of their students cannot reliably connect to the internet off-campus. For many, this digital exclusion is driven by financial hardship or a lack of access to the necessary devices. This is not just an inconvenience — it is an academic crisis. These students are locked out of essential educational resources, unable to participate fully in their coursework or engage in the hybrid learning models that many institutions have worked hard to implement. The threat to their academic success is real, as the lack of connectivity leaves them behind in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Furthermore, despite significant investments in hybrid learning to adapt to the pandemic, 90% of HSIs offering hybrid courses still struggle to deliver these courses effectively. The digital divide is not just a student issue — it is an institutional issue. For 74% of HSIs that have experienced a cyberattack within the last five years, the ongoing threat of breaches further strains already limited resources, making it harder to maintain secure and reliable digital infrastructures. This leaves institutions vulnerable and unable to fully protect the data and educational experiences of their students.

The need for targeted funding is urgent. Investing in broadband infrastructure is not merely a technological upgrade — it is a vital step toward leveling the playing field for students at HSIs, who have long been underfunded and overlooked in the broader digital transformation. It is a necessary investment in equity, opportunity, and the future of education for all students, ensuring they are not left behind because of the digital divide.

Pathways to citizenship and immigration reform

HACU strongly advocates for the immediate passage of the Dream Act as a crucial first step toward comprehensive immigration reform. This vital legislation offers a pathway to citizenship for an estimated 10.5 to 12 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. — individuals who contribute significantly to our economy and society.¹⁶

On February 26, 2025, Congresswomen Sylvia Garcia and Pramila Jayapal reintroduced the bipartisan American Dream and Promise Act of 2025, with the support of a wide array of lawmakers, including Reps. Nydia Velázquez, Yvette Clarke, Maria Elvira Salazar, Zoe Lofgren, Lou Correa, Judy Chu, and Delia Ramirez. This bipartisan bill enjoys broad support from 201 Members of Congress and nearly 120 organizations, demonstrating the widespread commitment to securing a brighter future for Dreamers, those brought to the U.S. as children, as well as those with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforcement Departure (DED).

This pivotal legislation would:

1. Grant conditional permanent residence to eligible Dreamers for ten years, halting removal proceedings during this time.
2. Provide a clear pathway to citizenship by offering Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) status to Dreamers.
3. Extend LPR status to those with TPS or DED.
4. Protect Dreamers and TPS/DED recipients throughout their application process under the American Dream and Promise Act.
5. Offer Dreamers access to federal financial aid, ensuring educational opportunities for all.
6. Allow Dreamers abroad to apply for relief under this Act, ensuring inclusivity.
7. Prevent penalties against states that offer in-state tuition for undocumented students.

This bill is identical to the version passed by the House in the 117th Congress and reflects the bipartisan nature of the issue, with President Trump's previous¹⁷ statements indicating a willingness to work with Democrats to protect Dreamers. Polls consistently show that the majority of Americans—across party lines—support efforts to grant Dreamers legal status and a path to citizenship, highlighting that this is a unifying issue.



The economic contributions of Dreamers and TPS recipients cannot be overstated. DACA recipients alone contribute approximately \$6.2 billion in federal taxes and \$3.3 billion in state and local taxes¹⁸ annually. According to the Center for American Progress, the national GDP could increase by a staggering \$799 billion over the next decade¹⁹ if Dreamers were given a pathway to citizenship. Dreamers are not just integral members of our workforce—they are driving growth, innovation, and prosperity across the nation.

Passing the American Dream and Promise Act of 2025 is not only a moral imperative but also a significant investment in the economic future of the United States. It is time to unlock the full potential of Dreamers, who are already contributing to our economy in countless ways, by providing them with the security, opportunities, and legal recognition they deserve.

President's Board of Advisors on HSIs

HACU is committed to working with the new administration to reinstate the President's Board of Advisors on HSIs, a critical body that has the potential to influence policy and funding decisions that directly impact the future of HSIs and their students.

HSIs are fundamental engines of economic mobility in the United States, propelling high numbers of low-income and first-generation college students toward prosperous careers and brighter futures. These institutions have consistently set the standard for excellence in higher education, playing a vital role in developing the next generation of leaders—scientists, scholars, innovators, educators, artists, and entrepreneurs. Importantly, 69% of doctoral students at HSIs are enrolled in science and engineering-related programs, underscoring the significant contribution HSIs make toward building a technically skilled workforce that can meet the nation's evolving needs.

With over 615 HSIs across 30 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, HSIs educate and serve more than 5.6 million students nationwide. More than 65% of Hispanic and Latino college students attend an HSI, and 40% of those students are enrolled in two-year HSIs. Additionally, HSIs educate 37% of all Pell Grant recipients in the country. Despite this extraordinary contribution, federal funding per student at HSIs remains 25% lower than at other degree-granting institutions, leaving HSIs at a distinct disadvantage compared to more resourced institutions.

The President's Board of Advisors on HSIs, originally established by Executive Order 14124 in July 2024 under the previous administration, was designed to help address these funding disparities by providing strategic guidance on how to maximize the potential of HSIs to benefit students and the workforce. The primary goals of the Board would include:

- **Raising awareness** about opportunities for HSIs to more equitably engage in federal programs and enhance their capacity to meet the needs of their students.
- **Identifying and scaling effective programs** that support the educational success and economic mobility of students attending HSIs.
- **Aligning academic offerings** with the evolving needs of the workforce, particularly in fields like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), as well as teaching.
- **Supporting fiscal security** for HSIs to ensure their long-term sustainability and growth.
- **Fostering cross-sector collaboration** between HSIs, philanthropic organizations, and the public and private sectors to strengthen resources and support for these institutions.
- **Improving federal recruitment activities** to create accessible pathways into federal careers for HSI students and alumni.

The reinstatement of this Board is essential to ensuring that HSIs continue to fulfill their vital role in serving underrepresented students and strengthening the workforce. HACU looks forward to fostering a productive, collaborative relationship with the new administration, working together to address the challenges faced by HSIs and their students, and ensuring that the impact of HSIs is fully realized and supported in future policy decisions.



HACU Western Region State Policy Agenda

HACU developed a State Policy Agenda for the Western Regional Office to establish a framework built upon HACU's federal accomplishments over the past 30 years. The priorities outlined are designed to advance the state policy needs of HSIs in Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington as critical drivers of social mobility and workforce development. Over 1.5 million full time undergraduate students, including those from low income, first generation and underserved backgrounds, will benefit from the support received by HSIs.

HACU's advocacy efforts ensure that HSIs across the western region receive the necessary appropriations to meet the educational and workforce needs of their respective states while driving economic growth, innovation, and long-term prosperity. Graduates from workforce-aligned HSIs see higher lifetime earnings, boosting individual and community wealth.²⁰ The transformational impact on HSI investments yields a high value return for students, employers, and the broader state economy.²¹

Advocacy expansion across the region has been driven by the growth of HSIs in western states and the need to ensure that state investments in higher education are commensurate to student enrollment at HSIs. As the second-largest region in the country by GDP at \$5.8 trillion, with California as the 5th largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$3.9 trillion, the western region has a projected need of over 1.8 million more bachelor's degree holders by 2030.²² Collectively, the region's HSIs—both public and private—are key stakeholders in state efforts to sustain economic growth and innovation.

The following state policy agenda priorities are specifically designed to address the emergent needs of HSIs in the western region.

Executive Order on State Governor HSI Advisory Councils

HACU urges the governors of Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon and Washington to issue Executive Orders formalizing the creation of HSI Advisory Councils in their respective states. These Councils will serve to provide recommendations on state initiatives, policies, and funding to enhance educational success for HSI students statewide. These strategic state partnerships aim to ensure that HSIs receive the necessary resources to support their growing student populations and contribute to a highly skilled and trained workforce.

State HSI Designation Legislation

HACU urges the State Legislatures representing the western regional states to enact legislation formally establishing a state-level HSI designation. The designation would provide a state-level framework for HSIs and a blueprint for state block grant funding opportunities to support workforce development and research. It would also strengthen a state's ability to support student success and improve educational outcomes for HSIs.

Workforce Development Investments

HACU urges State Legislatures to allocate dedicated funding for HSIs within each state's workforce development frameworks. HSIs are vital to state efforts in preparing students who are often first-generation, underrepresented, and low-income with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the 21st century economy.²³ By investing in HSIs, western states can engage more broadly and lead students onto pathways that cater to their career aspirations.



PK-12 Career and College Pathways Investments

HACU requests that state funding levels to PK-12 career and college pathways programs be commensurate with the growth of Hispanic-Serving School Districts. School districts with a high concentration of Hispanic students often experience higher rates of poverty, which can limit access to educational resources, academic opportunities, and support services, impacting student achievement and long-term economic mobility. We urge the State Legislatures and Governors serving the people of western region states to increase targeted investments outlined in state career education and college pathways programs related to HSSDs.

HACU National Internship Program (HNIP) – State

The HNIP-State is a workforce development initiative designed to provide competency-based learning experiences to students from HSIs through hands-on professional experiences in state agencies. This program aligns statewide priorities to develop a skilled workforce while ensuring access to career pathways in public service.

As a workforce development initiative, HNIP-State strengthens workforce capacity by fostering interest in public service careers, as well as providing exposure to evolving public administration and emerging industries. HNIP-State ensures that students from all socioeconomic backgrounds can engage in meaningful public service, ultimately strengthening state workforce development and governance.

Conclusion

It is crucial that HSIs are recognized as vital talent pipelines for workforce development, as they play an essential role in fostering a high-skilled labor force. Governors and legislators must understand that investing in HSIs is not just a commitment to higher education, but a strategic investment in a state's economic sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness on the national and global stage. By enacting legislation that safeguards HSIs and develops a comprehensive framework for success, state leaders can create a thriving ecosystem that benefits higher education institutions, students, and industries alike. This investment will ensure that states remain at the forefront of economic growth and global competition in the years to come.





Appendix

Federal HSI Appropriations FY 1995 – 2024 (in Millions of Dollars)

Source Year	HEA Title V, A*	HEA Title V, B	USDA Title VII	HUD HSIAC	DoD	STEM Title III-F	NSF	Totals
1995	12							12.0
1996	10.8							10.8
1997	10.8		1.4					12.2
1998	12		2.4					14.4
1999	28		2.9	6.5				37.4
2000	42.3		2.9	6.5	2			53.7
2001	68.5		3.5	6.5	5			83.5
2002	86		3.5	6.5	4.3			100.3
2003	92.3		4.1	5.0	6			107.4
2004	94.5		4.6	6.5	5			110.6
2005	95.1		5.6	6.7	4.3			111.7
2006	94.9		6.0	6.0	0			106.9
2007	94.9		6.0	6.0	0			106.9
2008	93.2		6.0	6.0	0	100		205.2
2009	93.2	11.5	6.0	6.0	0	100		216.7
2010	117.4	22.0	9.3	6.5	0	100		255.3
2011	104.3	20.8	9.2	0	0	100		234.3
2012	100.4	20.5	9.2	0	0	100		230.1
2013	95.4	19.4	8.7	0	0	95.0		218.5
2014	98.6	19.7	9.2	0	0	92.8		220.3
2015	100.2	9	9.2	0	0	92.8		211.2
2016	107.8	9.7	9.2	0	0	93.2		219.9
2017	107.8	9.7	9.2	0	0	93.1	15	234.8
2018	123.2	11.1	9.2	0	0	93.4	30	266.9
2019	124.4	11.2	9.2	0	0	93.8	40	278.6
2020	143.1	12.8	11.2	0	0	94.1	45	306.2
2021	148.73	13.8	12.5	0	0	94.3	46.5	315.83
2022	182.85	19.66	14.0	0	0	94.3*	48.5	359.31
2023	227.8	27.3	16	0	0	94.3	53.5	413.8
2024	227.8	27.3	16	0	0	94.3	46.5**	
TOTALS	2938.28	265.46	216.2	74.7	26.6	1625.4	325	5471.84

* Mandatory appropriations are provided under Section 371 of the HEA. The 2021 and 2022 levels for mandatory programs have been reduced by 5.7 percent which became effective on October 1, 2020, and October 1, 2021, respectively pursuant to Budget Control Act of 2011.

** Congress instructed the National Science Foundation to fund STEM education programs at or above the 2021 levels for 2024

Historical Appropriations and Requests (in millions)

PROGRAM	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25**	HACU's FY26 Request
Education – Title V, Part A (Undergraduate)	\$143.10	\$148.73	\$182.85	\$227.8	\$227.8	\$227.8	\$350
Education – Title V, Part B (Graduate)	\$12.80	\$13.85	\$19.66	\$27.3	\$27.3	\$27.3	\$150
Education – STEM Articulation	\$94.10	\$94.30	\$94.30	\$94.3	\$94.3	\$94.3	\$100
National Science Foundation	\$45	\$46.50	\$48.50	\$53.5	\$53.5	\$53.5	\$165

* Mandatory appropriations are provided under Section 371 of the HEA. The 2021 and 2022 levels for mandatory programs have been reduced by 5.7 percent which became effective on October 1, 2020, and October 1, 2021, respectively, pursuant to Budget Control Act of 2011. Although the 2023 level for mandatory programs is expected to be reduced by 5.7 percent, the amount in the table does not include the sequester reduction.

** In March 2025, Congress passed a Continuing Resolution for FY25 that keeps most funding at FY24 levels



Endnotes and Important Links

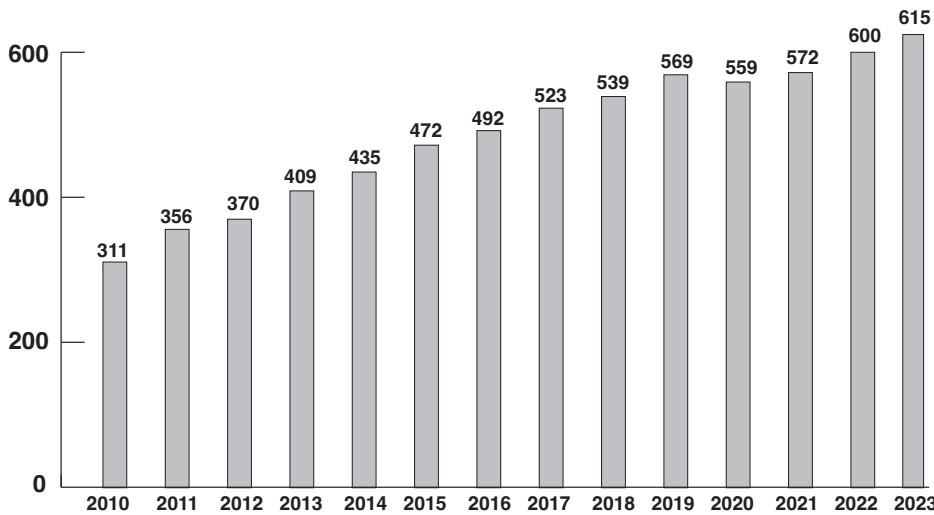
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Hispanic-Serving Institutions Quick Facts

HSIs **615**Emerging HSIs **425**

2010 - 2023 HSI Growth



HSIs enroll

5.6 million students

Grad total 527,095

Undergrad total 5,053,283

Total 5,580,378



HSIs enroll

37%

of Pell recipients

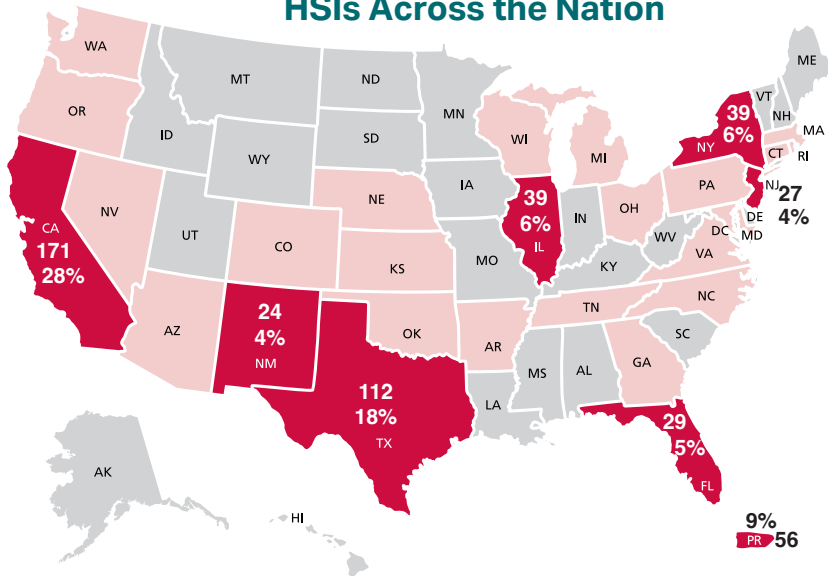


There are

3.7 million

Hispanic undergraduate and graduate students in nonprofit postsecondary education.

HSIs Across the Nation

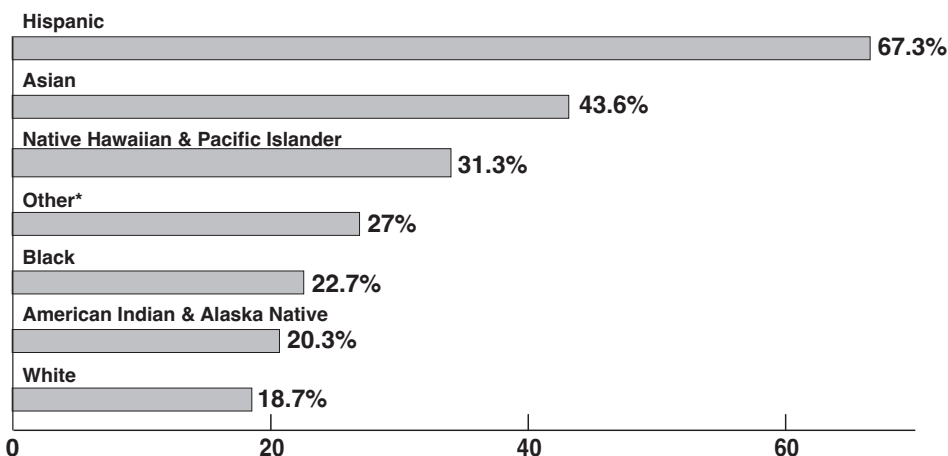


HSIs are in **30** states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico with a majority of them located in urban areas and concentrated geographically

California, Texas, Puerto Rico, New York, Illinois, Florida, New Mexico and New Jersey are home to 497 HSIs or

81% of HSIs

Percentage of U.S. Undergraduate Students at HSIs, by Race-Ethnicity



* Includes unknown and multiracial categories.

HSIs enroll

67.3%

of all Hispanic undergraduate students and

33%

of all undergraduate students in nonprofit postsecondary education

Source: 2023-24 IPEDS Database

National Headquarters

4801 N.W. Loop 410, Suite 701
San Antonio, TX 78229
(210) 692-3805
Email: hacu@hacu.net

Stay Connected with @hacunews on social media



www.hacu.net

Washington, D.C. Office

One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 430
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 833-8361
Email: dcgr@hacu.net

Western Regional Office

1107 9th Street, Suite 850
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 442-0392
Email: wro@hacu.net

Midwestern Regional Office

Chicago, Illinois
Email: MWRO@hacu.net

