

**A Needs Assessment Survey of the Ohio State University
Hispanic/Latino/Latina Student Community
Executive Summary**

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1. Introduction

Under the leadership of the Organization of Hispanic Faculty and Staff, and in close collaboration with representatives of Hispanic/Latino student organizations and heads of support service offices, a needs assessment survey was conducted of Hispanic/Latino students at The Ohio State University during Winter quarter of 2002. Similar to the survey conducted in 1994, this survey sought to understand the experiences of Hispanic/Latino students at OSU.

Special recognition of collaboration is extended to the Office of Academic Affairs and Provost, the Office of Student Affairs, the Office of Enrollment Services, the Office of Minority Affairs, the Office of International Affairs, the Office of International Education, and the Center for Latin American Studies for their leadership role and services in the development of this survey.

In addition, we also recognize the general sponsorship of this survey which included the following organizations: Alpha Psi Lambda, Canto Latino, Hispanic Business Student Association, Hispanic Graduate Student Organization, Mexican Student Association, Puerto Rican Student Organization, University-wide Council of Hispanic Organizations, First Year Experience, International Affairs, Office of Financial Aid, Multicultural Center, Latino Studies, and the Hispanic Oversight Committee.

The survey included questions about demographic characteristics; recruitment and orientation experiences; classroom experiences and climate and cultural sensitivity issues; use of, satisfaction with, and importance of various OSU student services; awareness of and involvement with Latino student organizations; and awareness of, involvement with, and satisfaction with Hispanic web sites, other means of communications (including printed materials and magazines), the Multicultural Center, and Hispanic Awareness Month.

2. Methodology

The survey was web-based. Email messages were sent to all 1,111 students who were initially identified as Hispanic by the Office of the University Registrar. There were an additional 30 students who completed the survey who identified themselves as Latino, but who were not recorded as such by the office. Messages about the survey were sent out with a letter from President William E. Kirwan on January 31, 2002. In addition, other methods of publicizing the survey were used such as meeting with leaders of student organizations, open student forums advertised over the Latino e-mail list-serve (owner-latinos@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu), Lantern advertisements, notices and articles in *Que Pasa, OSU?* magazine, courtesy telephone calls from fellow students, and word of mouth from friends or colleagues. A total of 397 students completed the survey, which determines a response rate of 34.8%.

The data for this study were collected from February 1 to March 31, 2002. The instrumentation consisted of a questionnaire intended to measure the perceived needs of Hispanic students at OSU. The 1994 survey served as a reference point for this survey. In addition, new and modified items for the questionnaire were generated by a series of focus group interviews and public forums involving Latino students, as well as meetings with representatives from sponsoring OSU offices.

The full report of this survey will be available in paper or electronically by request. Requests should be directed to: Professor Jose Cabral at cabral.1@osu.edu. The survey will be available on the Web in November 2002.

3. Demographics

Respondents were asked to identify their ethnic/racial backgrounds in terms of 13 categories. Individuals could choose more than one designation. The most common identifications were:

American of Mexican Descent	31.7%
South American	19.9%
American of Puerto Rican Descent	16.1%
White/Caucasian	14.4%
Caribbean	8.3%
Mexican	7.6%
European Hispanic	7.1%
Central American	5.8%
Other	5.3%

In sum, their backgrounds were quite varied. There were 171 male respondents (43.6%) and 221 female respondents (56.4%). The mean age was 23.4, while the median was 21.0. Some 38.8% were 20 or younger, 35.0% 21 to 25, and 14.5% 26 to 30. Most were single (82.2%), and very few had dependent children (7.6%).

Nearly all were fluent in English and about 57% reported fluency in Spanish. However, undergraduates were much less likely to report Spanish fluency (48.6%) than graduate/professional students (77.8%).

Most respondents were full-time students (89.5%), and also reported receiving financial assistance. Undergraduate students were more likely to receive scholarships and grants while graduate students were more likely to receive graduate associate positions. About half of the respondents were also employed (of those 49.6% were employed on campus and 50.4% off campus), with graduate students more likely to report being employed on campus than were undergraduate students.

When asked about residency status, 81.0% reported that they were U. S. citizens, with 6.3% being permanent residents. Graduate and professional students were more likely to be non-U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Among the graduate and professional students, 38.0% reported that they were at OSU on student visas, compared to 2.5% for the undergraduates.

See Chapter A part 3 of the full report for further detail.

4. Recruitment and Transition

4.1 Importance of various individuals and media in the recruiting efforts

Overwhelmingly, Latino undergraduates indicated that their families were important in their decision to come to Ohio State with nearly two thirds responding that family influenced their decision. Other factors included college students (28%), the web (26.5%), and high school counselors (25.6%).

The most frequently noted important influence in the decision to come to Ohio State for graduate/professional students was in the "Other" category, with 70% of respondents responding this way. The highest ranking source of influence for Latino graduate/ professional students respondents was family with nearly 50% of respondents indicating that they were important. Another important source of influence was the Web, with nearly 40% of graduate/professional students responding this way. Alumni and college friends were important to approximately 25% of respondents in this group.

See Chapter B part 2 of the full report for further detail.

4.2 Importance of OSU Offices in the recruiting efforts

The university offices that ranked as most important in helping Latino undergraduate students make their decision to attend Ohio State were the academic department or college, the Office of Admissions, the Office of Minority Affairs, and Hispanic Student Services.

For graduate/professional students, the academic department or college ranked highest in importance in helping them make their decision to attend Ohio State.

See Chapter B part 3 of the full report for further detail.

4.3 Students' reasons for coming to OSU

Students indicated that the most important reasons they came to OSU were financial assistance, the academic program, and the location or proximity to home. Some of the financial assistance indicated by the students included financial aid awards, scholarships (cited most often), graduate teaching appointments, and fellowships.

See Chapter B part 4 of the full report for further detail.

4.4 Orientation and Welcoming Activities

One fourth (25.5%) of undergraduate Latino respondents indicated that they did not participate in Summer Orientation. In addition, approximately a third (33.8%) of undergraduates indicated that they did not participate in Welcome Week activities. Latino graduate/professional students were more likely to attend Welcome Week than Summer Orientation.

Over 71% of undergraduate students found Summer Orientation to be helpful in their acclimation to the University. Over 68% of graduate/professional students found Summer Orientation to be helpful in their acclimation to the University.

With only 32% of undergraduate students indicating that Welcome Week was helpful in introducing them to the Latino community and student organizations, data suggest that a better connection needs to be made between Welcome Week and introducing Hispanic students to the Latino community and organizations and that, generally speaking, students need more information about organizations, services, and resources of interest to Latino students.

When asked what they needed to adjust to Ohio State, students most commonly responded that they wanted more information or thought greater visibility of programs and services was needed. They also mentioned the need to address issues with the climate for diversity, made suggestions for getting oriented and familiar with campus life, and discussed the need of a welcoming "space" and/or a more accessible location for the Multicultural Center.

See Chapter C parts 2 to 4 of the full report for further detail.

5. Retention

5.1 Use, importance and satisfaction with OSU Offices and Services

Offices most commonly used by Hispanic students (80% or higher) include academic advising, the Ohio Union, and Recreational Sports, with at least 80% reporting having used these offices.

Undergraduate students (77%) also were likely to use Student Financial Aid and Campus Dining Services while graduate/professional students commonly used Student Health Services (73%). However, evidence suggests that offices such as the Office of Minority Affairs (46.9%), career services, Hispanic Student Services (19.3%), Writing Center (14.3%), and the Younkin Success Center's Learning Lab (14.2%) may be underutilized by Hispanic/Latino students.

Compared to 1994, Hispanic and Latino students used analogous campus services at similar rates. There was a slight increase in the use of the Office of Minority Affairs and of Student Financial Aid.

When compared to the student population, Hispanic students were more likely to use Student Financial Aid, Recreational Sports, and Student Health Services. They were less likely to use the Office of Off-Campus and Commuter Student Services.

On average, most important to both undergraduate and graduate students (who used the services) were career services, Student Health Services, Student Financial Aid, Recreational Sports, and Office of International Education.

Overall, undergraduate students utilizing the services of the respective offices were most satisfied with the Office of Disability Services, Off-Campus and Commuter Student Services, Student Gender and Sexuality Services, Hispanic Student Services, and Office of Minority Affairs.

See Chapter D parts 2 to 4 of the full report for further detail.

5.2 Awareness and use of the OSU Multicultural Center

Overall, 39.1% of the student respondents reported being familiar with the OSU Multicultural Center (that opened in September, 2001). Approximately half of the students indicated that the Multicultural Center was useful. Hispanic/Latino students felt that they need a demarcated place to call their own to specifically foster a sense of Latino(a)/Hispanic community. When asked what they would like to see offered at the MCC, students indicated that additional resources, services, and programs need to be developed and marketed to students.

See Chapter D part 5 of the full report for further detail.

5.3 Awareness and use of Hispanic activities and media at OSU

The awareness and interest in Hispanic Awareness Month (HAM) activities were high. Over 92% (92.2%) of students indicated that they had heard of HAM and 70.1% said they were likely to attend events this year. Interestingly, only 43.7% replied that they had attended events in previous years. The striking difference between students' interest and actual attendance is worth further consideration. In addition, it is worth noting that the most students (89.3%) thought that activities should be offered throughout the year rather than compressed into one month.

Que Pasa, OSU? magazine enjoyed favorable ratings and seems to be a successful way to communicate with students. For example, 81.6% of undergraduate and 81.7% of graduate/professional students were aware of the magazine, and 54.4% of undergraduate and 63.5% of graduate/professional students reported reading the magazine. Additionally, the majority of students indicated that *Que Pasa, OSU?* magazine was either "useful" or "very useful" (61.6% for undergraduates and 66.2% for graduate/professional students). With only

12% of undergraduate students reporting having used the Hispanic web sites, evidence suggests that further examination and development of the sites is needed.

See Chapter E part 2 of the full report for further detail.

5.4 Students' involvement in Hispanic Organizations

As with HAM, the Multicultural Center and *Que Pasa, OSU?*; the majority of students were aware of the major Hispanic/Latino organizations while a much lower percentage participated. Among undergraduates, Alpha Psi Lambda was the most popular with 72% aware of the organization and 9.6% participating in it. For graduate/professional students, the Hispanic Graduate Organization was the most popular with 53% aware of it and 14.3% participating in it. Overall, approximately 30% of both undergraduate and graduate and professional students were involved in at least one of the Hispanic student organizations. Furthermore, 56.9% of undergraduates and 53.7% of graduate/professional students indicated that they were involved in at least one student organization on campus.

In addition, students most commonly learned of student organizations through other organizations, e-mail or list serves or by word of mouth/friends. And, if they were to create a student organization, the main focus would be on Latino involvement in the community, awareness of cultures, and Latino concerns/needs in transition and adjustment to college. Students also indicated that they would like to see organizations that would promote interactions between cultures and foster unity of all cultures with the focus on becoming more of a community than a culture.

See Chapter E part 3 of the full report for further detail.

6 Enrichment (Social Environment)

6.1 Academic Matters related to Latino issues in the classroom

Approximately half of undergraduate students were aware of (54.9%) and had taken (47.8%) a course that included topics related to Latinos. (Note that students who were aware of such courses tended to take them.) Nearly 70% of undergraduates reported having courses that included culturally sensitive topics. Since 1994, students are more likely to be aware of classes that include topics related to Latinos (52% compared to 29%) and are more likely to have taken such classes (42% compared to 34%).

Most of the respondents reported finding faculty who were helpful or supportive (84.8%), staff or administrators who were helpful or supportive (79.3%), and fellow students who were helpful or supportive (90.6%).

The undergraduates were more likely than the graduate and professional students to indicate that such faculty (42.5% vs. 24.2%) and staff or administrators (30.9% vs. 18.3%) were Hispanics or Latinos.

Based on taking culturally sensitive classes, there appears to be improvement since 1994. The following examples illustrate these improvements: 52.0% of the students reported being aware of courses at OSU that deal with Hispanics, compared to 29.1% of students in the 1994 survey. A total of 42.1% indicated that they had had coursework that included topics related to Latinos, compared to 33.5% in 1994.

See Chapter F part 2 of the full report for further detail.

6.2 Discrimination & Stereotyping

Despite the data presented above that improvements have been made to the general climate for Hispanic students at OSU, the rate of discrimination and stereotyping has remained constant. Almost a quarter of students (24.2%) reported having a “discriminatory” experience at OSU in 2002 as compared to 24.3% in 1994. Forty percent (40.1%) reported the existence of stereotypes in 2002 compared to 38.6% in 1994.

See Chapter F part 3 of the full report for further detail.

7. Suggested Recommendations

As a result of the 1991 Hispanic Action Plan, there have been improvements at Ohio State in addressing the needs of the Latino/Hispanic community. Some examples include the increased numbers of new Latino/Hispanic freshmen entering in autumn quarter; the creation of a minor in Latino Studies; funding of *Que Pasa, OSU?*; the creation of Latino staff position in Counseling and Consultation Services; and funding to support cultural enrichment programming through Hispanic Student Services. While these improvements have been a positive influence for the Latino/Hispanic community, the finds from this needs assessment show that issues remain that need to be addressed by the University in order to enhance the educational experience of Latino/Hispanic students.

7.1 Recruitment and Transition

- Engage family, college students and high school counselors in the recruitment of Latino/Hispanic students.
- Engage academic units in the recruitment of Latino/Hispanic students.
- Continue collaborative efforts between *Que Pasa, OSU?*, OMA and HSS with other university offices such as Admissions and Financial Aid in recruitment efforts.
- Continue to provide financial assistance to low income, high need Latino/Hispanic students and procure additional funding for scholarship assistance.
- Further examine Latino/Hispanic student participation in Summer Orientation and Welcome Week.
- Further develop Summer Orientation and Welcome Week to meet the needs of Latino/Hispanic students and to connect them with the University and to the Latino/Hispanic community.

7.2 Retention

Ohio State has many support services available to students but Hispanic/Latino students do not seem to fully utilize some of these services such as the Writing Center, Learning Lab and career services. There is the need for an effective mechanism to inform students of available services as well as to facilitate their usage of the services.

In addition, while students are aware of Latino organizations, participation is low. Involved students are more connected with and engaged in university life and tend to be more successful. Hence, students need a more intentional and effective approach to connect them to the OSU community and to assist them in acclimating to college life.

- Provide resources to continue to develop a unique identity of the Latino/Hispanic student community within the Multicultural Center through the development of a physical space as well as through programming and services.
- Explore the successes and encourage intentional outreach of the offices that have high interactions with Latino/Hispanic students, such as the Ohio Union, Recreational Sports, Academic Advising, Financial Aid, Campus Dining Services, Student Health Services, and Admissions.
- Enhance usage of OMA, HSS, Writing Center, career services, and the Younkin Success Center's Learning Lab.
- Develop academic associations through academic units and career services that enhance academic performance and expand visions of personal academic endeavors and careers.
- Expand the use of *Que Pasa, OSU?* and develop a cohesive and well-linked web environment for Latino/Hispanic students.
- Encourage and reward the engagement of faculty and staff with students to develop leadership skills.
- Establish annual leadership retreats to develop a student agenda and to engage faculty and staff.
- Develop and maintain a nucleus of student organizational leadership to ensure a unified voice within the Latino/Hispanic student community.

7.3 Enrichment

Discrimination and stereotyping are still problems for Latino/Hispanic students. The percentages of students indicating they had negative experiences remain high and unchanged since 1994. Ohio State's efforts to educate the university community on issues of diversity, multiculturalism and tolerance need to continue in order to reduce the incidents of discrimination and stereotyping.

The Multicultural Center, though it is new, is expected to provide Latino/Hispanic students with the physical space and the programming that would make them feel at home. The MCC needs to create the highly needed social support system that can allow students to network and provide cultural affirmation. A strong social support system is indispensable to good retention rates.

- Continue to expand Latino Studies program and courses.
- Continue to expand course offerings that contain topics related to Latino/Hispanics.
- Increase the number of events and activities with an academic and cultural focus.
- Expand the level of cultural sensitivity on campus, diversity awareness curriculum, leadership training in order to educate and engage the larger student community in fostering appreciation and acceptance of differences.
- Ensure adequate representation of Latino/Hispanics on the University Diversity Council.

7.4 Institutionalize this Latino/Hispanic Needs Assessment Study

Create a system to conduct a needs assessment every five years. Because Student Affairs is committed to diversity and has an assessment unit, consideration should be given to house the survey in the Student Affairs Assessment office. Latino/Hispanic student organizations and individuals, as well as faculty and staff should provide support to this effort in order to maximize student participation and also to become engaged in the process of transforming findings into improvements. It is the collaborative and participatory component of this effort that makes this needs assessment a true community mechanism of change.