

Illinois Latino College Landscape Study:

Bringing the dream of a higher education within reach for Latino students

Appendix A: Methodology

In 2022, the Latino College Landscape study was launched in partnership with the Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC) and was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the status of Latinos in preparing for, enrolling in, and completing college in Illinois and nationally?
2. What are the barriers and opportunities for Latinos as they prepare for, access, and complete college?
3. What could the education system do to support Latinos' preparation for, access to, and completion of college?
4. What organizations are involved in college advocacy in Illinois, and what are their focus areas and strategies?

IWERC addressed questions 1 and 2 by conducting a series of literature reviews and some quantitative analyses. To address questions 2 and 3, Lopez Strategic Solutions (LSS) conducted focus groups with Latinos including college students, students with some college but no degree, and college graduates, as well as parents of Latino high school and college students. In addition to the focus groups, LSS interviewed college staff. To answer question 4, LSS interviewed leaders from five nonprofits engaged in college advocacy in Illinois. Results from the interviews are not included in the report but will inform the Forum's advocacy agenda.

Literature Reviews

To conduct the literature review, IWERC employed a team of six researchers, including three core IWERC staff, two graduate students from UIC with work rooted partially in Latino/a/x studies, and a graduate student from UIUC with expertise in quantitative data analysis. The team conducted two types of research reviews: (1) a quantitative synthesis of available secondary data on postsecondary outcomes for Latino students and (2) a narrative synthesis of the research literature on the factors that influence those outcomes.

For the quantitative synthesis, the team collected available, disaggregated data from national sources (e.g., NCES, IPEDS), Illinois data systems (e.g., IBHE, Illinois Report Card), and select peer states' data systems (e.g., Texas, Arizona, California, New York, and Wisconsin). IWERC collected and analyzed data related to Latino students' high school performance, experiences, contexts, and outcomes; Latino students' college application, enrollment, major selection, and completion; the characteristics of Latino college-goers and Latino-serving institutions; and the workforce outcomes for Latino college graduates. The IWERC team compared data across contexts (Illinois, national, and peer states), between Latino students and other racial/ethnic groups, and, where possible, within the Latino community (e.g., for English Learners). Where available, data summaries already created by these sources were utilized; however, IWERC also conducted new analyses to make use of data that had not been summarized by the source.

For the narrative synthesis, the team searched for and collected relevant articles in the Zotero group citation manager. Team members were assigned to read and summarize articles on specific topics within the literature review. While the search largely consisted of journal articles, the team also reviewed relevant information from policy groups (such as Excelencia in Education) and reviewed colleges and

programs that came up multiple times in the literature search (e.g., St. Augustine College, Puente Project). These narrative reviews were divided into syntheses of literature on the transition to college and on college persistence. Each review was then organized around key factors identified in the literature synthesis, building on organizational frameworks for considering these factors developed by seminal scholars (e.g., Flores, Yosso). IWERC then presented summaries of the literature on each factor along with representative data and quotes from the literature where possible.

Focus Groups and Interviews

The focus groups were conducted by Gudelia López, principal at Lopez Strategic Solutions, and Vanessa Peña, a former policy analyst at the Latino Policy Forum.

The focus groups aimed to understand the challenges and opportunities Latinos face in preparing for, accessing college, and completing college. Recruitment materials were developed in English and Spanish. The following groups were recruited for the focus groups via the Forum's website, emails to Forum partners, and social media including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn:

- one group of parents of Latino/a/x children in high school,
- one group of parents of Latino/a/x children in college,
- three groups of Latino/a/x college students 18 years or older,
- one group of Latino/a/x college graduates between 18 and 34 years old, and
- one group of Latino/a/x young adults between the ages of 18 to 34 with some college but no degree.

Individuals who wished to volunteer were instructed to complete a short SurveyMonkey form in English or Spanish that asked them which of the above groups they belonged to, their preferred language, and availability over a six-week period. Non-parent participants were also asked to name the high school they were attending or had attended and as appropriate the college they were attending or had attended.

Of the approximately 320 individuals who completed the form, about 170 met the criteria of having attended high school or college in Illinois. Every attempt was made to ensure the groups were diverse in terms of geography and type of college attended. Forty-seven Latino students and parents participated in seven focus groups. Each of the focus groups had a different number of participants, ranging from three to 13.

College students, college graduates, and young adults with some college but no degree were asked questions about their experience preparing for college while in high school as well as their experience navigating college. In addition, college graduates were also asked about preparing for graduate school and work. Parents were asked about how and when they started talking to their children about college, where they learned about the college application and financial aid process, and any issues they knew their children experienced in preparing for or navigating college. All groups were asked for their recommendations on how to strengthen college-going and completion for Latinos.

The following individuals who serve Latino students in Illinois were recruited for the interviews via the Forum's website, direct email, and social media including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn:

- college academic advisors and Dean of Student Office staff,
- college access staff at nonprofits, and
- high school counselors, assistant principals, or principals.

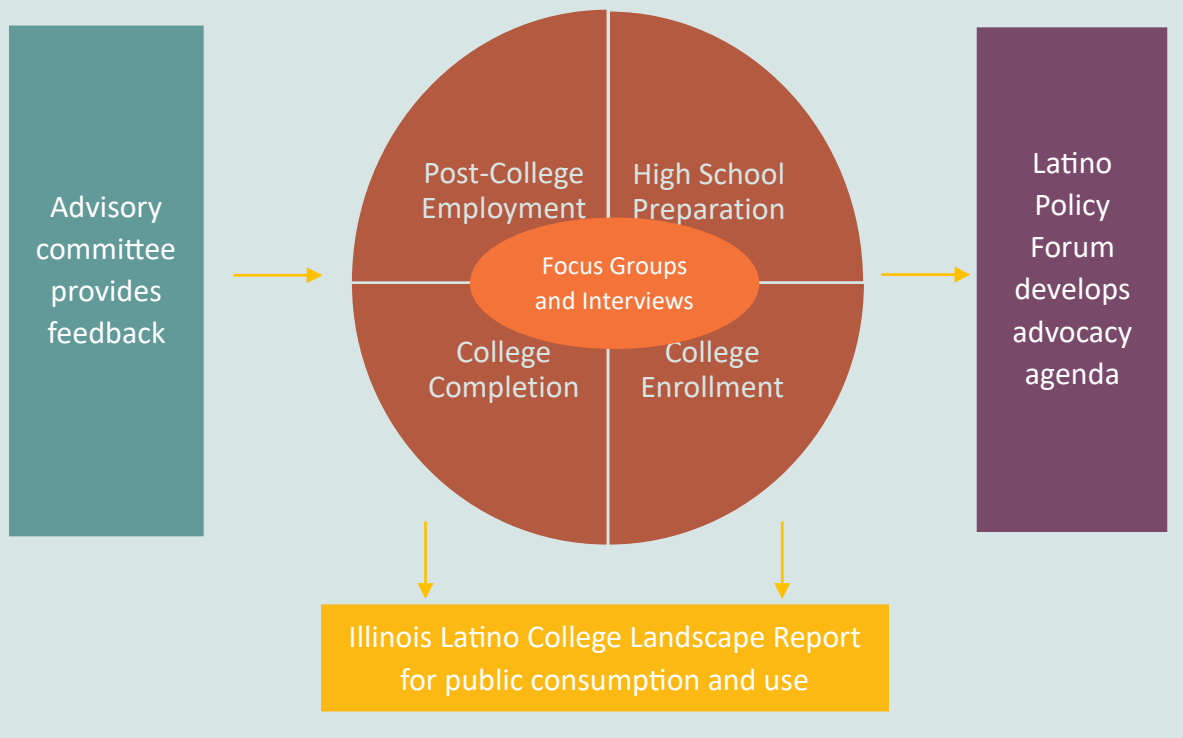
Recruitment of these individuals was not as fruitful as that of parents and students. Three university staff volunteered and participated in interviews. Finally, five advocacy leaders were asked and agreed to participate in the advocacy interviews.

The focus groups and interviews were transcribed and coded. Key themes were identified in a separate document. These themes included the key factors found through the literature review. Thus, quotes that illustrated the factors were identified and included in the report. However, there is a lot of rich information that didn't make it into the report but will continue to guide the work of the Latino Policy Forum and in the case of the advocacy organizations, will help determine future partnerships.

Process

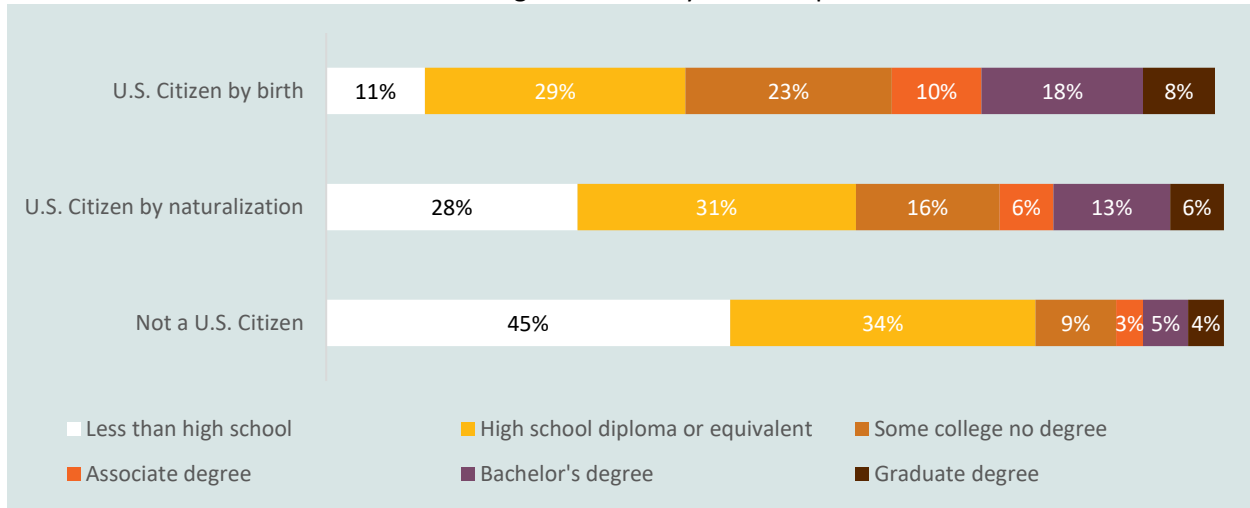
Figure A1 shows the process for this work. The research reviews conducted by IWERC on high school preparation, college enrollment, college completion, post-college employment, and the stakeholder focus groups and interviews form the center of the work. The advisory committee provided feedback on the literature reviews and provided insight into the factors that influence Latino college access and completion. This information is helping the Forum develop its advocacy agenda and forms the basis for this landscape report.

FIGURE A1
Process for the Latino College Landscape Study



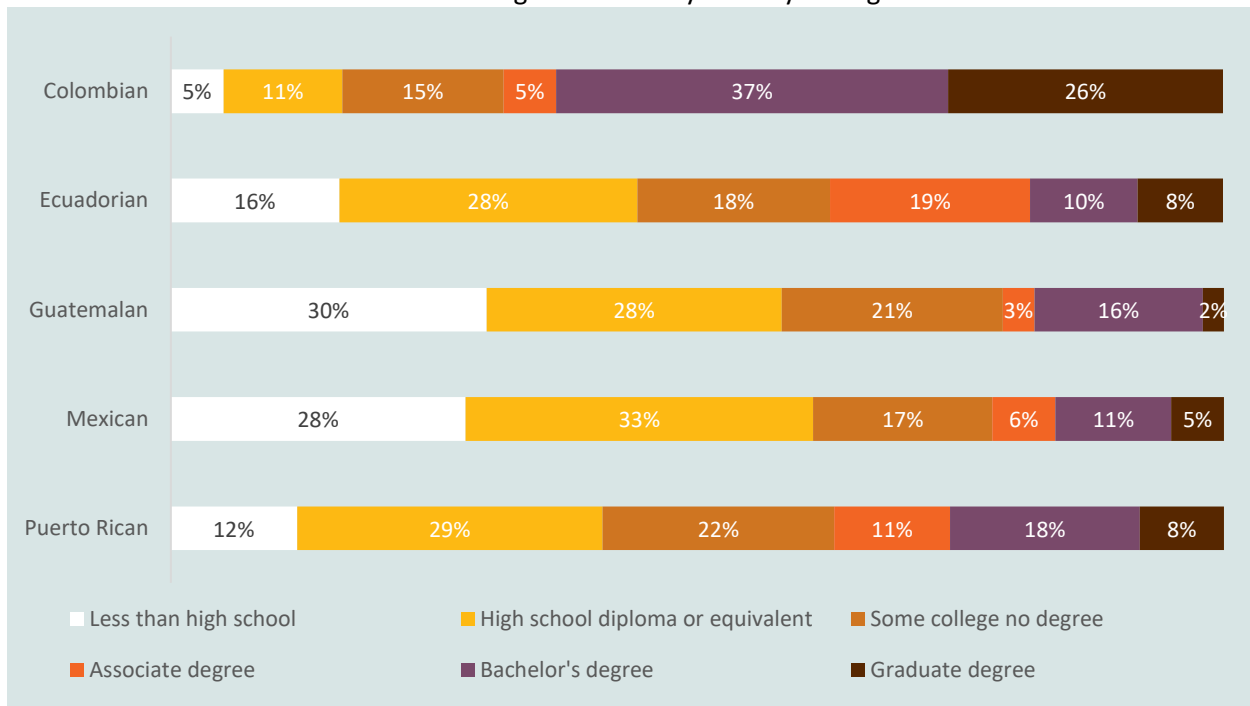
Appendix B: Additional Figures

FIGURE B1
Educational attainment of Illinois Latinos aged 25 to 64 by citizenship: 2021



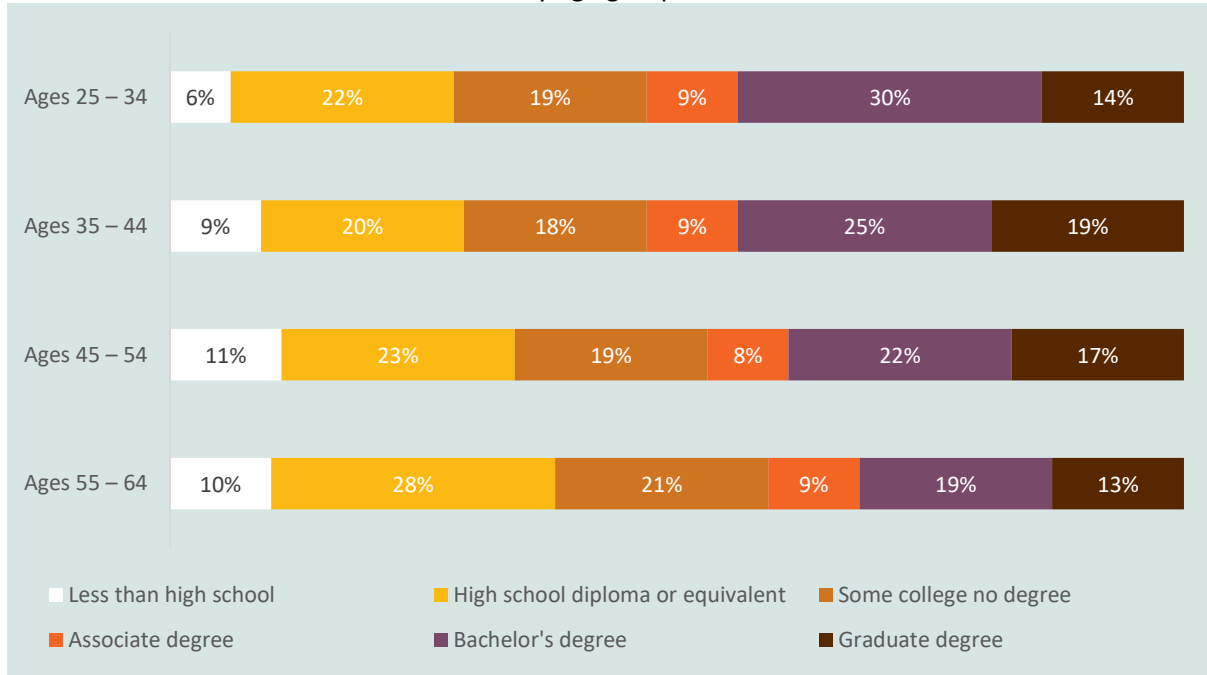
Source: 2021, 1-yr estimates, ACS Public Use Microdata set. Limited to Latinos aged 25-64.

FIGURE B2
Educational attainment of Illinois Latinos aged 25 to 64 by country of origin: 2021



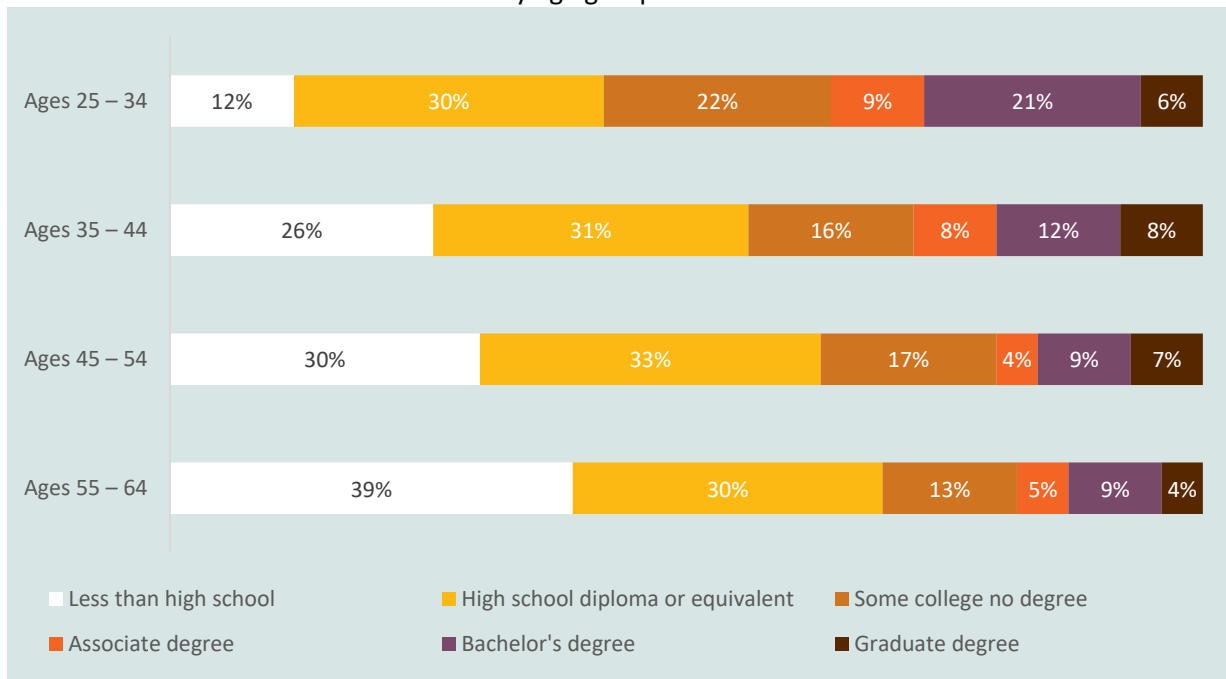
Source: 2021, 1-yr estimates, ACS Public Use Microdata set. Limited to ages 25-64 and the top 5 countries of origin for the Latino population in Illinois.

FIGURE B3
Educational attainment of all Illinois adults by age group: 2021



Source: 2021, 1-yr estimates, ACS Public Use Microdata set. Limited to ages 25-64.

FIGURE B4
Educational attainment of Illinois Latinos by age group: 2021



Source: 2021, 1-yr estimates, ACS Public Use Microdata set. Limited to Latinos aged 25-64.