Beyond Diversity: Are we there yet?

An Examination of University of California, Riverside’s ‘Success’ of Diversity and their ‘Commitment’ to Chicano and Latino Students as a Hispanic Serving Institution

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*A portion of the “Riverside Gateway” mural that serves as a gateway between UCR and the city of Riverside. This portion shows Rupert and Jeannette Costo, two Native Indians who were key players in lobbying for the establishment of UCR. The mural also includes diverse portrayals of peoples, community, histories of Riverside, and the first Chicano chancellor Tomas Rivera; yet this mural goes unnoticed and uncared for…*

Introduction to UCRs *Success* of *Diversity*

In the 2013 September/October issue of *Washington Monthly Magazine*, the University of California, Riverside was ranked 2nd in the nation among national universities in their [ninth-annual College Ranking Survey](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/college_guide/toc_2013.php). Their ratings of the schools were based on “their contribution to the public good in three broad categories: Social Mobility (recruiting and graduating low-income students), Research (producing cutting-edge scholarship and PhDs), and Service (encouraging students to give something back to their country).” In individual sub-categories, UCR had three top-10 rankings, including:

* Second in the “Percentage of federal work-study funds spent on service.” UCR finished at 57%.
* Third in “Community service participation and hours served,” which measures the number of students participating in service and the number of hours performed, both relative to school size.
* Sixth in “number of faculty receiving prestigious awards,” relative to the number of full-time faculty.

In addition, with the Obama Administration proposing to change the way higher education is assessed by how well institutions serve their students, in April of 2014 *TIME* magazine gathered data from 2,500 college and universities and ranked them accordingly. “The proposed metrics of the rankings were based on graduation rates, tuition, and the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants.” UCR was ranked number one based off of these statistics:

* Graduation Rate: 66% Rank: 337
* Pell Grant: 59% Rank: 175
* Average Cost: $9,109 Rank (Low to High): 107

These two recognitions have recently been UCRs largest notions of *success* and they have been *riding the wave* of these national rankings to truly brand the university within the larger spectrum of the public eye. As a student here, I have seen *diversity* and student *success* become the focus of discussions with UCR; so much that UCR believes it is *leading the pack,* so to speak. In *UCRs 2020 strategic plan: The Path to Preeminence* which outlines the strategic intent for the future growth and development of the University, the institution is and has been pushing to initiate an integration of *success* and *diversity* within the core values of the institution; they will soon go together hand in hand. As part of the plan, strategic goal #3 is for UCR to serve as a “National Exemplar for Diversity, Inclusiveness, and Community.” To accomplish such task, UCR will:

1) Expand Opportunities for Intellectual Stimulation

2) Strengthen the sense of Community

3) Increase Diversity of Faculty, Graduate Students, and Staff

4) Enhance a Sense of Place

5) Enhance the Quality of Life for Students

6) Assess and Address Climate

These new recognitions and plans are great in the perspective that UCR can be seen as a top ranking university and will only continue to grow and gain a stronger nationwide status. In addition, they will continue to claim to be *successful* based on makers or merit such as national rankings, recognitions, and their plans for the future. Furthermore, the university does a fantastic job at promoting these *successes* on every piece of media and public outlet from their websites, magazines, and alumni newsletters, to their student orientations, events for prospective students, and even on campus tours; the recognitions trickle down from the media to the masses to underscore the university as a *global force.*

Problematizing UCR as an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)

In an interview with current UCR Chancellor Kim Wilcox, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* said that UCR was “one of the most socioeconomically diverse public research universities in the United States [and is] reaching parity in student success.” I myself was *sold* on the diversity and opportunity for success when I was accepted to UCR as a transfer student and I *bought* into it as many other students did as I submitted my statement of intent to register (SIR). I was told by transfer advisors here that UCR was *known* for accepting many transfer students and in my case, trying to transfer from a Cal State institution my chances would be limited. After visiting the campus and learning more about the programs I would be studying, I decided this would be a greater opportunity to advance myself as a student.

Now looking back several years to 2008, UCR was officially recognized as a Hispanic-serving Institution (HSI) and was the first UC to receive such an honor. Well what does this mean? Defined in Title V of the Higher Education Act, Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs) are defined as “not-for-profit institutions of higher learning with a full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate student enrollment that is at least 25 percent Hispanic.” With this designation, UCR is eligible to receive and apply for grants to develop programs and provide support “for *Hispanic* and other low-income students.”

So if the University of California, Riverside has all these *successes* plus many more linking to the *diverse* student population, then why would anyone believe there would be problems with the institution committing to serve students? Specifically with the Chicano and Latino students on campus in which as of fall of 2014, comprised about 36.6% of the total student population making them the 2nd largest ethnic group on campus; why would anyone propose that the institution fails to commit to all students *success?* Well as a Chicano student, my experience when I got here was much different that I had hoped for as I was bombarded by multiple choice exams, impacted class sizes, poor faculty communication, and overall a lack of quality education to myself and peers alike.

In the scope of the nation, in 2012 according to the US Census Bureau, “by 2060 it is estimated that the Latino population would more than double from today’s 53.3 million to 128.8 million, comprising 31 percent of the nation’s population.” In 2013, “Latinos in Riverside County comprised 48 percent of the population and in San Bernardino County they are slightly over 50 percent” (Narrvaro, pg. 121, 168). Now although population is increasing nationally, education attainment and support for Chicano and Latino students has been un-parallel at the institutional level. Again, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 1970 to 2010, “the educational attainment by race (college graduates) was: Asians, 52.4 percent; whites, 30.3 percent; blacks, 19.8 percent; and Latinos, 13.9 percent.” In the scope of UCR since their accreditation as a HSI in 2008, as of fall of 2014 the population for Chicano and Latino undergraduate students increased by 8.8 percent. Now back in the fall of 2008 to the fall of 2010, the Chicano and Latino undergraduate student population increased by 3 percent. This was a steady increase, although, the four year graduation rates from 2008 to 2010 in which UCR only provides graduation rates up to that year, only increased 1 percent (40.5% to 41.5%) as opposed to Asian Americans whose four year graduation rates increase from 47.4 percent to 51.9 percent while their population on campus grew steadily as well. Why is this? Yes there are external factors involved, but internally at UCR what seems to be the *problem* and why?

To this day, the Chicano and Latino student population will continue to increase as UCR plans to enroll up to 3000 more students by 2020, but our graduation rates have not steadily shown improvement. Even with the lack of quality education that many students receive, 1 in 3 Chicano and Latino students fail to graduate and this measurement is based on a 6 year “national” rate. The fact of the matter is that on paper UCRs praxis of *success* for *diversity* looks great. Even as a HSI, on paper it may show we have many *diverse* programs and initiatives that lead to the *success* and involvement of *Hispanic* or Chicano and Latino students in campus activities, but the reality is that the university does not entirely serve the diverse Chicano and Latino student population like it is mandated to as an HSI. There is no equal opportunity and direct support for all Chicano and Latino students nor for low income students at UCR. Yes the institution supports students financially with over 60 percent of students receiving Pell Grants, but federal financial aid does not increase ones success. Student have to support one another and/or themselves in order to get through this institution of *higher learning* which leaves the question remaining; is UCR a “Hispanic Serving” Institution that goes beyond the numbers of enrollments? If so, how?

University of California Diversity Statement

To *unpack* this notion of diversity, provided is a brief contextualization of what was recommended by the Academic Senate of the University of California to the Regents back in 2006-2007.

The *University of California Diversity Statement*, adopted as “Regents Policy 4400” in 2007, is a dry document that contextualizes what the UC institution says about diversity and outlines the importance of diversity and equal opportunity parallel to the mission of the UC system. It is the official statement and policy in which all UC institutions *follow,* or are *suppose*d to *follow*. It states that the UCs interest are to serve the diverse population of the state of California and clearly states that diversity “refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance.” Furthermore, there is a range of differences of “culture and circumstance.”

Provided is a portion of the statement specifically stating the *vision* for diversity:

“Diversity should also be integral to the University’s achievement of excellence. Diversity can enhance the ability of the University to accomplish its academic mission. Diversity aims to broaden and deepen both the educational experience and the scholarly environment, as students and faculty learn to interact effectively with each other, preparing them to participate in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society. Ideas, and practices based on those ideas, can be made richer by the process of being born and nurtured in a diverse community. The pluralistic university can model a process of proposing and testing ideas through respectful, civil communication. Educational excellence that truly incorporates diversity thus can promote mutual respect and make possible the full, effective use of the talents and abilities of all to foster innovation and train future leadership.”

There are no facts provided in this statement; simply it is a policy in which lays the foundation for all UCs to follow. In addition, the Academic senate acknowledges that there is an “acute need” to rid the barriers for underrepresented students, faculty, and staff, but does not state how to do so which leaves the tasks to the institutions themselves under the UC system.

Data Analysis of Chicano and Latino Students at UCR:

Provided are the Demographics of Chicano and Latino students at UCR for the past ten years (Fall 2004 to Fall 2014); before and after UCRs 2008 HSI designation. It is broken down by the total enrollment of Chicano and Latino undergraduates per year in relation to the total undergraduate population, enrollment totals of Chicano and Latino undergraduates per college group (CHASS, CNAS, BCOE, & SOBA), as well as the total amount of enrolled Chicano and Latino graduate students.

The two pie charts show the demographics of all identified ethnic groups on campus in comparison of Fall 2008 and Fall 2014 in which the total undergraduate student population increased from 15,708 to 18,782 students. These specific years are chosen to examine UCRs growth since their HSI designation. Within this six year period, the Chicano and Latino group had the greatest and most significant increase of representation on campus.

The two bar graphs show the concentrations of enrollment for Chicano and Latino undergraduates by each college parallel to the total enrollment of each college; they are also a comparison of Fall 2008 and Fall 2014. As all colleges showed an increased enrollment of Chicano and Latino students within the span of six years, the college with the highest concentration is and has been, CHASS. In 2014 Chicano and Latino students comprised the majority of all CHASS enrollments with 42 percent; an increase from 2008s 30.4 percent.

However, the overall enrollment of CHASS only increased slightly as opposed to all other colleges in which their overall enrollments increased significantly. In CNAS and BCOE, the percentage of Chicano and Latino enrollments increased from 23.3 percent to 31.2 percent and 24.1 percent to 28.1 percent, respectively. In SOBA, data is not provided until Fall of 2009. Although, in 2014 Chicano and Latino students comprised 26.7 percent with 271 enrolled making them the second largest ethnic concentration of that college; the first is Asian/Asian American with an astonishing 50.1 percent.



Review of UCR as an HSI

In the time since UCRs recognition as a HSI, they have received several grants in order to support Hispanic and low-income students. By far the largest was in 2011, UCR received a five year $3.93 Million dollar grant from the Department of Education in an effort to push students and create pathways towards STEM careers. Co-principle investigator of the grant Richard Cardullo (dean of life sciences in CNAS) stated that "this program is about creating and sustaining a pipeline to get these traditionally underrepresented students into STEM fields. This has been part of UCR's commitment over the years – it is consistent with our diverse student profile and one that we are extremely proud of." This grant is used to serve two purposes: it has allowed UCR to continue efforts to help these groups of students at the - community college - level and place them on “a path towards bachelor's and advanced degrees in fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM),” secondly it has been used to “support student recruitment and retention activities for Hispanic and low-income students in both the Bourns College of Engineering (BCOE) and the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (CNAS)” – as said by the lead principle investigator Chinya Ravishankar (associate dean of undergraduate education in BCOE). This grant has allowed CNAS and BCOE to continue programs that include outreach, summer bridges, academic advising and support, hands-on design projects, paid research opportunities, and so much more. How many students actually participate in these programs is unknown, but these concrete support outlets are something that all colleges at UCR should be doing and can be used as a good example.

As an area of “national importance,” this push for “Hispanic and low-income” students into the STEM fields is great, but the issues are much larger than just a focus in the STEM fields. From Fall of 2011 (since the grant) to Fall of 2014, in CNAS the enrollments of Chicano and Latino students showed a 276 enrollment increase, while BCOE showed a negative 8 decrease. In CHASS, enrollments increased by 380 students in that three year period. The enrollments of “low-income” students were not available as the data was not disaggregated in that way. CHASS has been and is the college with the largest concentration of Chicano and Latino students, yet CHASS has no concrete support that is of the same equivalence. As Senator Barbara has said, "This important investment will help UC Riverside train the next generation of talented Latino students to become leaders in science, technology, engineering and mathematics." But what about the masses of Chicano and Latino students majored under CHASS and the couple hundred in SOBA? Where is their concrete support?

Areas in Need of Further Review

It has been said in passing by UCRs Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, that the federally funded TRiO Programs on campus received additional grants through the schools HSI recognition. An overview and analysis of such needs to be examined if the information were to become available.

In addition, a case study should be done on UCRs HUB for Chicano and Latino student support, Chicano Student Programs (CSP); specifically their relationship with students, relationships with administration, how UCRs HSI as helped support them or not, their role with the university, the work they have done in the past and present, and the pressures the institution has placed on them with the never ending task of directly supporting students.

Lastly, a further analysis of the diverse Chicano and Latino student data needs to be done, in addition with “low-income” students as well as an analysis of all HSI funding. If UCR is a “Hispanic Serving Institution,” then how? There needs to be a clear transparency of UCR as a HSI that supports all “Hispanic and low-income” students.

Conclusion

In a 2011 interview with Assistant Executive Vice Chancellor, William Kidder, and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Jim Sandoval, it was said by the *Hispanic Outlook Journal* that “despite its track record of success, with 62 percent of Latino students getting a degree within six years, about one of every three Latino students fails to graduate from UC-Riverside.” Kidder responded by saying that number can be “misleading, as many students transfer and graduate from other institutions – and others fall in love, their circumstances change, or they move away.” What is not said is that the reality is that Chicano and Latino are being “pushed out” by the institution from the lack of support and commitment to Chicano and Latino students’ success.

Looking at UCR today, yes there has been an overall positive increase of diverse Chicano and Latino students that will only continue to grow tremendously. UCR will admit them, but will they serve them? The graduation rates have been un-parallel to increase in students. If there is no foundational support for the masses that is not just financial, then UCR is not ready to serve the booming “Hispanic” population.

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