



More Latinos and African Americans Value Higher Education ADVERTISEMENT

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A higher percentage of Latinos and African Americans in California value college education as a necessary path to success in today's work world, compared to their Asian and white counterparts, according to a recent survey.

Last week, the Public Policy Institute of California released its latest report, "Californians & Higher Education," which reflects a spectrum of perspectives on California's higher education among different ethnic groups. PPIC polled 2,502 adults in five languages – English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese.

Eighty-one percent of Latinos and 76 percent of African Americans believe that college education is necessary for a person to become successful, the report found. Only 57 percent of whites and 66 percent of Asians share the same perspective.

Kim Thomas-Barrios, executive director of the Neighborhood Academic Initiative Program at University of Southern California, said she was not surprised by the survey's findings.

"Education [means a] better life for them," she said.

Her program offers college prep for low-income students who are predominantly African American and Latino. Students enrolled in the program receive additional courses in English and mathematics, and extra information on college access, on the campus during weekends.

Thomas-Barrios said that historically African-American and Latino families who attended college earn better salaries and are often seen by their communities as those "who made it."

While more Latinos and African Americans highly value college education, they are not necessarily receiving one. Their college admission rates remain significantly lower than other major ethnic groups.

According to admissions data from the University of California, African Americans and Latinos make up 4 percent and 22.2 percent respectively of the fall 2009 admissions to UC campuses; Asian Americans and whites make up 34.9 percent and 33.1 percent respectively.

Michele Siqueiros, executive director of Campaign for College Opportunity in Los Angeles, said the survey figures show there is "a gap between aspiration and actualization" in the Latino and African-American communities.

Siqueiros said the high cost of higher education is one hurdle for black and Latino students. They typically can't afford the extras—like SAT prep courses—as well as the four-year tuition and expenses.

The survey proves her point. According to the survey, 74 percent of African Americans and 64 percent of Latinos believe qualified students from low-income families, regardless of their ethnic background, have fewer opportunities to receive a college education, compared to nearly 60 percent of Asians and whites.

"That is why it is so important to preserve Cal Grants and other grants to low income students," said Siqueiros.

In addition to college costs, more Latinos and African Americans also see race as a factor.

The survey shows 59 percent of African Americans and 51 percent of Latinos believe qualified students of an ethnic or racial minority have less opportunity to enter college. Only 29 percent of Asians and whites believe race is an issue.

Both Siqueiros and Thomas-Barrios agreed that the one problem is a lack of college-graduate role models. While generating role models in both communities may take a longer time, Thomas-Barrios said that educating parents about college pathways would have an immediate effect on the younger

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generation.

Despite the gap between the aspirations of Latino and African American youth and the reality of their experience, Siqueiros said it was very positive to see that underrepresented groups place a high value on college education.

“We hope to see admission rates continue to grow in these communities,” she said.

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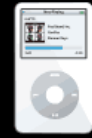
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