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## Increasing Academic Achievement and College-Going Rates for Latina/o English Language Learners: A Survey of School Counselor Interventions

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### Abstract

This study was conducted to identify the extent to which school counselors use various intervention strategies to promote college attendance for Latina/o English Language Learners (ELLs). Specifically, school counselors across the Northeast (n = 198) were asked to identify activities they implement on behalf of Latina/o ELLs to increase college-going rates. The results suggested the importance of the following: collaborating with multiple school and community stakeholders, addressing the inadequacy of resources through advocacy and leadership, and keeping track of dropout, graduation, and college-acceptance data for Latina/o ELLs to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities.

### Keywords

school counselors, Latina/o English language learners, academic achievement, college access

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Amy Cook, Rachele Pérusse, & Eliana D. Rojas

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This study was conducted to identify the extent to which school counselors use various intervention strategies to promote college attendance for Latina/o English Language Learners (ELLs). Specifically, school counselors across the Northeast ( $n = 198$ ) were asked to identify activities they implement on behalf of Latina/o ELLs to increase college-going rates. The results suggested the importance of the following: collaborating with multiple school and community stakeholders, addressing the inadequacy of resources through advocacy and leadership, and keeping track of dropout, graduation, and college-acceptance data for Latina/o ELLs to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities.

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The National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) published by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) helped to clarify the role of the school counselor through emphasizing the importance of developing and implementing comprehensive school counseling programs. The National Standards became a driving force in developing the *ASCA National Model* (Pérusse, Goodnough, & Noël, 2001), which provided a framework through which school counselors could develop effective and comprehensive school counseling programs focusing on foundation, service delivery, management, and accountability (ASCA, 2005). An integral component of the service delivery model includes taking on a leadership role through facilitating collaboration with parents and families as well as school personnel, including teachers

and school administrators. Through collaboration efforts, school counselors can identify and address achievement gaps and college opportunity gaps to promote equitable education for all students (ASCA, 2010; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). In this study, components of the National Standards and the National Model formed the basis of a survey aimed at finding out how school counselors utilize collaboration and other interventions to help Latina/o English Language Learners (ELLs) achieve academically and increase college access.

Achievement and opportunity gaps are prevalent among urban school populations, particularly Latina/o ELLs as they are likely to reside in urban and impoverished areas. Limited resources commonly include having inexperienced teachers and/or “out-of-field” teachers (educators who do not have a degree in the

subject area they teach). Moreover, there are often few academic resources, including computers and applications (Flores, 2007). Latino/a Spanish-speaking adults, including teachers and counselors, are also underrepresented in public schools (MacDonald, 2004). In addition, Latina/o students often have limited educational experience and capital since students and their families may not be familiar with school policies in the United States (Villalba, Akos, Keeter, & Ames, 2007). The same can be said of Latina/o ELLs given their recent arrival to the United States.

In addition to limited resources and funding, Latina/o ELLs encounter other barriers to academic achievement. These include acculturation stressors and English-language challenges. Acculturation stressors include racism and discrimination (Escobar, Nervi, & Gara, 2000; Villalba et al., 2007). Often Latina/o ELLs experience additional stress at home due to differences in the level of acculturation between the parent(s) and student. When the parent(s) or caretaker(s) has greater difficulty assimilating to American mainstream culture in comparison to his or her child, tension within the family can arise. Villalba et al. (2007) identified the negative impact on academic achievement as a result of acculturation stress, discrimination, and racism. In terms of English language difficulties, Latino/a ELLs are often recommended for remedial-level classes and special education classrooms despite presence of a learning disability (MacDonald, 2004; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006, as cited in Arellano & Padilla 1996). Additionally, placement in remedial courses often occurs across all subjects instead of just in those identified content areas of need.

Communication can also be challenging for Latina/o ELLs' parents and families. Given both language and cultural

differences, parents can experience difficulties talking to teachers and school personnel, including the school counselor. They may not be aware of the different cultural norms within United States public schools and, as such, do not seek involvement with educators (Ramirez, 2003). As a result, a parent may not exert his or her influence in advocating for appropriate academic placement that suits the student's educational goals and career aspirations. Furthermore, some Latina/o ELLs' parents may be afraid to communicate their concerns with school personnel because of their undocumented immigration status (Ramirez, 2003). This study purports to identify ways that school counselors can best support the academic, career, and social/emotion needs of Latina/o ELLs and their parents.

### **Need for the Study**

Latina/o students drop out of high school at a much higher rate compared to their white non-Latina/o peers (Ochoa & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2004; Olivos & Quintana de Valladolid, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In addition, the Latina/o student population currently comprises the fastest-growing student population within U.S. schools (Fry, 2008), with an estimated Latina/o school-aged population (ages 5-19) likely to reach approximately 20.1 million by the year 2025 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Evidence-based research examining school counselor interventions on behalf of Latina/o ELLs is needed to help close achievement gaps and college opportunity gaps. However, little research has been conducted that focuses on issues regarding ELLs. More specifically, Albers, Hoffman and Lundahl (2009) through their review of journal coverage of student-service professions, including school counselors, found a dearth of research addressing the

needs of ELLs. The authors specifically found that during a 10-year period (between the years 1995 and 2005) only 4.8% of the published articles in peer-reviewed counseling journals addressed ELL student needs in K-12 settings. Albers et al. (2009) emphasized the need for additional research in this area.

Although many studies are helpful in suggesting possible school counselor interventions with Latina/o ELLs, very few specifically examine the school counselor's role in working with this specific population and/or do not provide concrete data to support recommended interventions. For example, Militello, Carey, Dimmit, Lee, and Schweid (2009), examined 18 culturally and socio-economically diverse high schools that achieved a College Board honorable mention award for obtaining high achievement. In doing so, they described school counselors' interventions with low-income students, including Latina/o students, but did not specifically address the needs of Latina/o ELLs. Focusing solely on Latina/o students may fail to capture a myriad of barriers that Latina/o ELLs encounter, such as English language challenges, immigration status, and acculturation issues (MacDonald, 2004; Villalba et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important to address the academic needs of Latina/o ELLs, and not just Latinos/as or ELLs, due to the different challenges and needs that may manifest. In another study, Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, and Allen (2008) interviewed 16 Latina students from a large urban high school in Southern California where 31% of students were ELLs. The authors described Latina students' thoughts regarding their experiences with their teachers and counselors; however, the study did not directly identify Latina/o ELLs' academic needs and did not specifically examine school counselors' interventions. Another

study conducted by Thorn and Contreras (2005) examined school counselor interventions on behalf of Latina/o immigrant students at a California school whose population of Spanish-speaking students increased 380% from 1995 to 2004. Although this study provided potential school counselor interventions on behalf of Latina/o ELLs, the research was conducted in only one school, making it difficult to generalize the results to other schools with similar student populations.

Given the consequences of high dropout rates and barriers to academic success for Latina/o ELLs combined with the burgeoning Latina/o youth population (Fry, 2008), it behooves educators to act immediately to address these inequities. School counselors are in a position to support schools as they encounter an influx of Latina/o ELLs and can meet these students' needs. Promoting academic achievement among Latina/o ELLs cannot be achieved by school counselors alone; rather, it requires a collaborative effort among all school personnel as well as reaching out to community members and involving multiple stakeholders. Villalba et al. (2007) identified the integral role that school counselors can and should endeavor to hold in facilitating Latina/o students' academic achievement. The *ASCA National Model* also emphasizes the need for school counselors to facilitate a collaboration effort among various school and community stakeholders to close the achievement gap (ASCA, 2005). The present study aims to identify ways school counselors can access school and community-based resources to assist Latina/o ELL student needs. Results from this study include recommendations for practicing school counselors and counselor educators.

## **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to identify school counselor interventions on behalf of Latina/o ELLs that help to promote academic achievement and college access. It is well-documented that academic achievement and college opportunity gaps are ubiquitous between Latina/o students and their white counterparts (Ochoa & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2004; Olivos & Quintana de Valladolid, 2005). English language difficulties that Latina/o ELLs encounter negatively impact academic success (Olivos & Valladolid, 2005). The focus of this study was to learn more about the types of activities school counselors engage in with Latina/o ELLs and to identify activities associated with raising academic achievement and college access among Latina/o ELLs. In doing so, the following three research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What type of interventions are school counselors implementing with and on behalf of Latina/o ELLs? (b) What school counselor characteristics are associated with types of interventions that school counselors implement? (c) How do resources within schools affect academic achievement and college access among Latina/o ELLs?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The population for this study consisted of school counselors across the Northeast, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and New York. The schools sampled represented urban high schools with Hispanic/Latina/o students making up at least 10% of the school population. Data Market Retrieval (an independent company) provided mailing addresses of 1,000 school

counselors. The total population of school counselors was obtained for all states with the exception of New York since selection criteria was set to include school counselors working in schools with at least a 10% Hispanic/Latina/o student population. Due to the large number of New York school counselors working in schools that met the selection criteria, a randomly selected list of those school counselors was obtained.

The survey was mailed to 1,000 high school level school counselors. A total of 87 surveys were not deliverable and 243 were returned, resulting in a 26.6% return rate. Twelve of the returned surveys were not completed and contained notes indicating that the school counselor either did not work with ELLs or worked as a social worker. Those returned that indicated location ( $n = 198$ ) represented the five different geographic locations as follows: 22.2% of the surveys were received from Connecticut ( $n = 44$ ); 5.6% from Rhode Island ( $n = 11$ ); 24.2% from Massachusetts ( $n = 48$ ); 2.5% from New Hampshire ( $n = 5$ ); and 45.5% from New York ( $n = 90$ ). These numbers reflected the percentage distribution of mailed surveys: 141 (14.1%) were mailed to Connecticut school counselors; 56 (5.6%) were mailed to Rhode Island school counselors; 203 (20.3%) were mailed to Massachusetts school counselors; 27 (2.7%) were mailed to New Hampshire school counselors; and 573 (57.3%) were mailed to New York school counselors.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument developed for this study was purported to measure self-perceptions of school counselor interventions on behalf of Latina/o ELLs. Because there were no available questionnaires that examined self-perceptions of school counselor interventions, an instrument was developed

and piloted. The instrument used in this study included 12 demographic items and 27 Likert-type questions to assess frequency of interventions on a 5-point scale: Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Often, and Always. School counselor and teacher education literature was reviewed to generate items to be used in the survey, while following the *ASCA National Model* to ensure items represented the importance of collaborating with relevant stakeholders. More specifically, the College Board's (2009) *College Counseling Sourcebook* and school counselor recommendations from the literature, such as Villalba et al. (2007), were used as sources to generate survey items. Six school counseling professionals reviewed the survey items for content validity before the survey was piloted.

Appendix A includes means and standard deviations for participant response. High scores on the scales indicated that school counselors reported engaging more frequently in activities with and on behalf of students, while low scores on the scales indicated lower reported engagement. In running reliability and factor analyses, two scales were obtained: College Planning with Students (CPS), which resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .892, and Consultation with School and Community Stakeholders (CSCS), which resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .853.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The Total Design Method was used as a reference in collecting the data (Dillman, 1978). Each school counselor was mailed a paper survey with an investigator-addressed, stamped envelope to participate in the study. In addition, they were provided information about the purpose of the study and contact information for the investigator. Furthermore, they were provided the opportunity to participate in an anonymous

raffle drawing to win one of four \$50 American Express gift cards as a token of appreciation for their participation in the study. A second mailing was sent to school counselors who did not respond to the first mailing to increase response rate. In addition, between the first mailing and second mailing (approximately two weeks after sending the first mailing) a post card reminder was sent to school counselors.

### **Results**

Average high school size was 1,376.7 ( $SD = 1,063.9$ ), with 60 students as the smallest school population reported and 4,900 students as the largest school population. Over half of the school counselors ( $M = 54.6\%$ ) reported that they had greater than 151 Latina/o ELLs in their school ( $n = 59$ ); 17.6% of school counselors reported that they had between 51 to 150 Latina/o ELLs in their school ( $n = 19$ ); and 38.0% of school counselors reported that they had 50 or fewer Latina/o ELLs ( $n = 41$ ). In terms of the school counselor's perception of adequate school resources to address Latina/o ELLs' academic needs, 58.4% responded in the affirmative ( $n = 90$ ), while 41.6% reported insufficient resources ( $n = 64$ ).

Regarding school counselor demographics (see Appendix B), 24.7% of the school counselors reported speaking Spanish fluently ( $n = 40$ ), while 75.3% reported not speaking Spanish fluently ( $n = 122$ ). Most of the school counselors self-reported their race as Caucasian/white ( $n = 85$ ; 63.4%), followed by Hispanic/Latina/o ( $n = 34$ , 25.4%), African American/black ( $n = 9$ ; 6.7%), Asian ( $n = 3$ ; 2.2%), and biracial/multiracial ( $n = 3$ ; 2.2%). In terms of work experience as a school counselor, the majority reported having five years or less of experience ( $n = 78$ ; 38.2%), followed by 6 to 10 years of experience ( $n = 47$ ;

23.0%), 11 to 20 years of experience ( $n = 53$ ; 26.0%), and greater than 20 years of experience ( $n = 23$ ; 11.3%). The majority of school counselors reported being a member of at least one professional organization ( $n = 172$ ; 72.3%), while 27.7% indicated no professional membership ( $n = 66$ ).

The following data included information that school counselors self-reported regarding dropout rates, high school graduation rates, and plans to attend college. The reported mean percentage of Latina/o ELLs who received a high school diploma was 79.1% ( $n = 129$ ;  $SD = 25.4\%$ ), and the mean reported percentage of students who dropped out was 11.7% ( $n = 65$ ;  $SD = 12.5\%$ ). The mean reported percentage of Latina/o ELLs who go on to attend a 4-year college was 39.3% ( $n = 108$ ;  $SD = 28.5\%$ ); the mean reported percentage of Latina/o ELLs who go on to attend a 2-year college was 35.9% ( $n = 109$ ;  $SD = 21.3\%$ ); and the mean reported percentage of Latina/o ELLs who go on to attend a vocational or technical school was 9.5% ( $n = 88$ ;  $SD = 11.3\%$ ).

Means and standard deviations were used to answer research question one: What type of interventions are school counselors implementing with and on behalf of Latina/o ELLs? The mean for the CPS scale was 4.08 with a standard deviation of 0.866. The mean for the CSCS scale was 2.70 with a standard deviation of 0.964. The correlation between the two Likert-type scales was .585. In conducting a paired-samples t-test, the mean difference of 1.34 between the two scales was statistically significant, with respondents reporting greater engagement with Latina/o ELL students compared to involvement with teachers, parents, and community members on promoting academic achievement ( $t(220) = 23.632$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

Average reported frequency of engaging with and on behalf of Latina/o

ELLs ranged from a mean of 1.83 ( $n = 198$ ) (visit Latina/o ELL students' homes to facilitate parent/guardian involvement in their child's education) to a mean of 4.36 ( $n = 196$ ) (assist Latina/o ELL students with the college application process). The three most frequently reported activities beyond assisting students with the college application process included: (1) providing Latina/o ELL students the opportunity to participate in SAT preparation programs ( $M = 4.13$ ;  $n = 197$ ); (2) providing Latina/o ELL students access to college/career planning computer applications ( $M = 4.18$ ;  $n = 196$ ); and (3) encouraging Latina/o ELL students to take honors/advanced placement level courses ( $M = 4.02$ ;  $n = 194$ ). Appendix A includes reported mean frequency data for the remaining survey items.

In an effort to identify specific school counselor interventions that were associated with raising academic achievement among Latina/o ELL students, a correlation matrix of the individual survey items on the two scales and achievement data was produced. In doing so, the following statistically significant correlations were obtained. (Only moderate correlations,  $r > .40$ , are presented.) Item 9 (*Collaborate with teachers to highlight Latina/o ELL student achievements through school-wide newsletters, bulletin boards, announcements, etc.*) was positively correlated with receiving a high school diploma ( $r = .472$ ;  $p = .009$ ). There was a positive correlation between item 12 (*Encourage Latina/o ELL students interested in going to college to take a college course while attending high school*) and receiving a high school diploma ( $r = .403$ ;  $p = .027$ ). Item 18 (*Organize workshops for Latina/o ELL parents/guardians to discuss future career and educational opportunities for students*) was positively correlated plans to attend a 4-year college ( $r = .482$ ;  $p = .007$ ). There was



also a positive correlation between item 20 (*Encourage Latina/o parents/guardians representative of various professions to come speak to Latina/o students*) and plans to attend a 2-year college ( $r = .425$ ;  $p = .021$ ).

T-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to answer research question two: What school counselor characteristics are associated with types of interventions that school counselors implement? There was a significant mean difference of 0.461 on the CSCS scale between school counselors who reported speaking Spanish ( $M = 2.88$ ) and those who did not ( $M = 2.42$ ) ( $t(155) = 2.675$ ;  $p = .008$ ). Similarly, in examining the frequency of school counselor interventions by school counselor self-report of race/ethnicity, there were significant mean differences for the CSCS scale ( $F(2,120) = 5.757$ ;  $p = .004$ ). Caucasian/white, African American/black, and Hispanic/Latina/o were the only three groups for comparison since other racial/ethnic groups reported were too few to be included in the analyses. Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons of the three groups indicated that the respondents who self-reported their race/ethnicity as Hispanic/Latina/o ( $M = 2.96$ , 95% CI [2.65, 3.28]) scored higher on the CSCS scale compared to those who self-reported as Caucasian/white ( $M = 2.33$ , 95% CI [2.13, 2.52];  $p = .003$ ).

Correlations and paired t-tests were used to answer research question three: How do resources within schools affect academic achievement and college access among Latina/o ELLs? There was a significant mean difference of 0.34 on the CCPS scale between those schools in which school counselors reported having adequate resources for Latina/o ELLs ( $M = 4.15$ ) and those in which school counselors reported having inadequate resources ( $M = 3.81$ ) ( $t(139) = 2.163$ ;  $p = .032$ ). In examining the

percentage of Latina/o ELLs receiving a high school diploma, there was a significant mean difference of 0.149 between schools that reported to have adequate resources and those that did not ( $t(78) = 2.584$ ;  $p = .012$ ). Mean percentages for Latina/o ELL students receiving a high school diploma were higher among those schools in which school counselors reported having adequate resources ( $M = 0.831$ ) compared to those with inadequate resources ( $M = 0.682$ ). Likewise, the mean percentage dropout rate for Latina/o ELLs was lower in those schools that school counselors indicated as having adequate resources ( $M = 0.084$ ) compared to those schools with inadequate resources ( $M = 0.169$ ). The mean difference of 0.085 between these groups was significant ( $t(61) = 2.721$ ;  $p = .008$ ).

In terms of resources for Latina/o ELLs, school counselors reported the following resources being frequently offered in their schools: ESL classes; Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classes; bilingual counselors and teachers; materials printed and distributed in Spanish; financial aid workshops in Spanish; ELL department; tutoring and after school programs; mentoring programs; orientation programs; Latina/o club and activities; and community partnerships.

## Discussion

The results of this research add to the school counseling literature, as it is one of the first studies to provide data-driven information about school counselor interventions on behalf of Latina/o ELLs. While many researchers have made qualitative suggestions on how to promote academic achievement among Latina/o students, the present study represents the first attempt to quantify these suggestions. Several school counselor-reported activities were found to be moderately correlated with

Latina/o ELLs' academic achievement. For example, "*Encouraging Latina/o ELLs to take a college course while attending high school*" and "*Collaborating with teachers to highlight Latina/o ELL student achievements through school-wide newsletters, bulletin boards, announcements, etc.*" were positively correlated to receiving a high school diploma. In addition, "*Encouraging parents of various professions to come to speak to Latina/o ELLs*" was positively correlated with going on to attend a 2-year college. Lastly, "*Organizing workshops for Latina/o ELL parents/guardians to discuss future career and educational opportunities for students*" was positively correlated with receiving a high school diploma and going on to attend a 4-year college.

Although correlations of survey items to reported academic achievement data were moderate, the results potentially indicate which types of interventions could help to promote academic success among some Latina/o ELLs. Furthermore, it is important to take into consideration that a variety of factors affect academic achievement, such as peer group, parental involvement, and role models (Villalba et al. 2007). The findings of the present study suggest that there may be specific activities that are particularly helpful for school counselors to implement with Latina/o ELLs' in promoting academic success. The results further reinforce the need for school counselors to take on a leadership role within the school to ensure they have sufficient time to engage in interventions that promote academic achievement among Latina/o ELLs rather than become hindered by non-essential administrative activities (Reiner, Colbert, & Pérusse, 2009).

The present study also lends support to the importance of adequate resources in promoting academic achievement. School counselors reported a variety of bilingual resources being frequently offered in their

schools, such as bilingual counselors and teachers, materials printed and distributed in Spanish, tutoring and after school programs, mentoring programs, and Latina/o club and activities, to name a few. School counselors who indicated working in schools with sufficient resources implemented activities with Latina/o ELLs more frequently compared to the school counselors who reported working in schools with insufficient resources. In addition, reported mean percentages for Latina/o ELLs receiving a high school diploma were higher among those schools in which school counselors reported having adequate resources compared to those with inadequate resources. Similarly, the dropout rate for Latina/o ELLs was reported to be lower in those schools that school counselors indicated as having adequate resources compared to those schools with inadequate resources.

This study identified some potential resources that could be beneficial in supporting Latina/o ELLs' academic success. Results emphasize the importance of school counselors collaborating with multiple school and community stakeholders in advocating for Latina/o ELL academic success. Militello et al. (2009) emphasized the need to advocate on behalf of students and collaborate with teachers to place students in AP courses. Reaching out to parents and involving them in students' academic planning are integral activities to Latina/o students achieving academically (Lopez, 2011). Engaging in various college-going activities and maintaining relevant data regarding Latina/o student academic progress are also important school counselor interventions (Villalba et al., 2007).

The findings in the study suggest that school counselor activities involving key school and community stakeholders help to promote college access among Latina/o ELLs. There is a specific need for Latina/o

role models and bilingualism in serving Latina/o ELLs as MacDonald (2004) emphasized. Latina/o and/or Spanish-speaking school counselors stated that they collaborated more often with parents, teachers, and key community members compared to their white and/or non-Spanish-speaking counterparts. Although one might expect Spanish-speaking school counselors to readily engage with parents, bilingual school counselors reported frequently engaging with community partners and teachers as well. This finding suggests the need for strong cultural awareness and advocacy skills, both of which are emphasized in the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005). Olivos and Quintana de Valladolid (2005) emphasized the need to address the pervasive opportunity gaps that preclude Latina/o students and Latina/o ELLs from accessing equitable educational options. School counselors could assist Latina/o ELLs through identifying and connecting students and their families to appropriate community-based resources if they are not readily available within the school.

### **Implications for School Counselors and Counselor Educators**

The results can be used to identify specific interventions that school counselors can implement with and on behalf of Latina/o ELLs to increase college access. For example, *Collaborating with teachers to highlight Latina/o ELL student achievements through school-wide newsletters, bulletin boards, announcements, etc.* was found to be positively correlated with receiving a high school diploma. In a review of 18 high-achieving high schools, defined as culturally and socio-economically diverse high schools that achieved a College Board honorable mention award for obtaining high achievement, Militello et al. (2009) found

that the schools publicly honored and celebrated student successes, which was one of several activities that helped to close achievement gaps for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Results from the present study support this finding, while also identifying specific interventions that are beneficial for Latina/o ELLs in promoting academic achievement.

Bryan (2005) emphasized the importance of promoting partnerships between parents and schools in promoting academic achievement among minority and low-income students. In this study, a moderate correlation was found between *Organizing workshops for Latina/o ELL parents/guardians to discuss future career and educational opportunities for students and going on to attend a four-year college*, and *Encouraging parents of various professions to come to speak to Latina/o ELLs* was moderately correlated with going on to attend a two-year college. Furthermore, Villalba et al. (2007) suggested inviting Latina/o professionals to speak with students about post-secondary options so they could serve as positive role models and reinforce academic achievement. The present study provides support for these recommendations.

Additionally, school counselors can support Latina/o ELLs' needs through accessing relevant resources for students. There are a variety of interventions that school counselors can initiate within the school community to assist Latina/o ELLs. Collaborating with parents and families through holding family meetings, informational sessions, relevant workshops, and community-based meetings would help to build connections between the school and home. In doing so, school counselors need to ensure they provide culturally relevant information and recognize systemic barriers that Latina/o ELLs' encounter to achieving academic success.

The findings of the present study are also relevant for counselor educators. In preparing students to enter the school counseling profession, counselor educators can include information on ways students can address Latina/o ELLs' academic needs. Introductory course work to the field of school counseling could include building awareness regarding contributing factors toward the achievement gap and ways to promote academic success for this population. According to Wilczenski, Cook, and Hayden (2011), building multicultural competency and social justice awareness needs to be addressed throughout all aspects of a school counseling curriculum. In doing so, particular attention to serving the specific needs of Latina/o ELLs and their families must to be emphasized. For example, during internship seminar, discussion can focus on identifying culturally sensitive ways to collaborate with and connect Latina/o ELLs' parents and families to the school. Teaching and practicing consultation skills that highlight ways to communicate with Latina/o parents would also be beneficial. Additional discussions could focus on identifying ways to close the achievement gap and address systemic barriers that Latina/o ELLs' encounter. For example, students could be assigned the task to engage in an action research project with goals of identifying a systemic problem occurring in a school and developing an action plan to address the problem. Part of the action plan could include identifying relevant community-based resources to support Latina/o ELLs. Students could then present their findings to the school where they are completing their field placement.

### **Limitations**

There are limitations to this study, with the first and foremost being the low

response rate (26.6%). However, despite the low number of participants, there were several significant findings that were obtained and could be further researched. Another limitation might include variation in interpretation among the Likert-scale and demographic items. For example, some participants may have reported the percentage of dropout and graduation rates for their twelfth grade students while others may have reported percentages based on cohort data, examining dropout and attrition data from grades nine through twelve. The frequencies collected by the survey were not measured directly but rather through respondent self-reported perception, which limits the ability to assess student outcomes. Lastly, the respondents may have wanted to appear as though their actions were beneficial in promoting academic achievement among Latina/o ELLs.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Despite these limitations, this study is the first to quantify and examine data-based outcomes vis-à-vis Latina/o ELLs and school counselor interventions. The results emphasize the importance of delivering a comprehensive school counseling program, one that is inclusive of working with students and collaborating with parents, teachers, and other key stakeholders in order to close achievement and opportunity gaps for Latina/o ELLs.

More data-based research needs to be conducted to fully understand the impact of varying interventions on the academic achievement and college-going rates of Latina/o ELLs. Further research could be targeted at a smaller number of schools in order to better gather outcome data such as academic achievement, graduation rates, and college-going/post-secondary attendance rates. A more focused sample would allow researchers to understand the impact of a

fully implemented school counseling program aimed at helping Latina/o ELL students within these areas of achievement.

Further research might include using the conceptual framework within the current research instrument to survey other key stakeholders, including students and parents, in the school in order to make comparisons about the views and practices of school counselors, school administrators, and teachers. Given the finding that Latina/o and Spanish-speaking school counselors reported engaging in activities with parents, teachers, and community members more frequently compared to Caucasian/white and non-Spanish-speaking school counselors, it would also be beneficial to conduct further research to learn more about Latina/o school counselors' work on behalf of Latina/o ELLs. In doing so, one could focus on identifying ways all stakeholders might promote academic success for these students. Finally, because it has been argued that college preparation needs to begin in elementary school (Nevarez & Rico, 2007),

further research on behalf of Latina/o ELLs could be conducted at the elementary and middle school levels.

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## Appendix A

### Means and Standard Deviations for Participant Responses

| Survey Item CCPS Scale                                                                                                   | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 4. Encourage Latina/o ELL students to take honors/advanced placement level courses.                                      | 194      | 4.02     | 1.005     |
| 5. Provide Latina/o ELL students the opportunity to participate in SAT preparation programs.                             | 196      | 4.18     | 1.110     |
| 6. Encourage Latina/o ELL students interested in going to college to enroll in college experience summer programs.       | 195      | 3.83     | 1.175     |
| 12. Encourage Latina/o ELL students interested in going to college to take a college course while attending high school. | 197      | 3.89     | 1.169     |
| 17. Offer financial aid/scholarship workshops for Latina/o ELL students interested in going to college.                  | 196      | 3.90     | 1.250     |
| 22. Provide Latina/o ELL students access to computer applications containing college/career planning.                    | 197      | 4.13     | 1.145     |
| 26. Assist Latina/o ELL students with the college application process.                                                   | 196      | 4.36     | 1.053     |



| Survey Item CSCS Scale                                                                                                                               | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 9. Collaborate with teachers to highlight Latina/o ELL student achievements through school-wide newsletters, bulletins boards, announcements, etc... | 196      | 3.02     | 1.373     |
| 10. Visit Latina/o ELL students' homes to facilitate parent/guardian involvement in their child's education.                                         | 198      | 1.83     | 1.159     |
| 14. Collaborate with teachers to run classroom guidance lessons for Latina/o ELL students that focus on academic achievement.                        | 198      | 3.16     | 1.412     |
| 15. Collaborate with middle school personnel to create college awareness programs targeting Latina/o ELL students.                                   | 193      | 2.12     | 1.303     |
| 18. Organize workshops for Latina/o ELL parents/guardians to discuss future career and educational opportunities for students.                       | 194      | 3.06     | 1.365     |
| 20. Encourage Latina/o parents/guardians representative of various professions to come speak to Latina/o students.                                   | 189      | 2.59     | 1.282     |
| 27. Collaborate with teachers to support Latina/o ELL students' development of bilingual literacy.                                                   | 192      | 3.23     | 1.375     |

## Appendix B

### Demographic Data

| Variable                                                 |                        | <i>n</i> | Mean% |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------|-------|
| School counselor fluent in Spanish                       | Yes                    | 40       | 24.7% |
|                                                          | No                     | 122      | 75.3% |
| Race/ethnicity                                           | White/Caucasian        | 85       | 63.4% |
|                                                          | Hispanic/Latina/o      | 34       | 25.4% |
|                                                          | African American/Black | 9        | 6.7%  |
|                                                          | Asian                  | 3        | 2.2%  |
|                                                          | Biracial               | 3        | 2.2%  |
| Years of experience                                      | Five years or less     | 78       | 38.2% |
|                                                          | 6 to 10                | 47       | 23.0% |
|                                                          | 11 to 20               | 53       | 26.0% |
|                                                          | 20+                    | 23       | 11.3% |
| Reported number of ELLs who received high school diploma | 129                    | 79.1%    | 25.4% |
| Reported number of ELLs who dropped out of high school   | 65                     | 11.7%    | 12.5% |
| 4-year reported ELLs' college-acceptance                 | 108                    | 39.3%    | 28.5% |
| 2-year reported ELLs' college-acceptance                 | 109                    | 35.9%    | 21.3% |
| Vocational/technical school acceptance                   | 88                     | 9.5%     | 11.3% |

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