

September 30, 2014

**Santa Barbara City College Honored as America's Top Program
in the Associate Degree Category at Increasing Latino Student Success in College**
*National initiative adds to America's largest inventory of proven practices
for accelerating degree completion among Latinos*

Santa Barbara, Calif. - Elected officials and higher education leaders from across the United States came together today in Washington, D.C. to honor Santa Barbara City College's Express to Success Program (ESP) as the nation's top program for increasing achievement for Latino students at the associate degree category. ESP was selected from among 217 programs from 26 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia nominated in four categories: associates degree, bachelors degree, graduate degree, and community-based organization. Conceived and run by *Excelencia* in Education, this is the only national initiative to systematically identify, recognize, and catalogue evidence-based programs that improve Latino college success.

Kathy Molloy, SBCC Professor of English/English Skills and Express to Success Project Director, represented the college at the Washington, D.C. award ceremony and also spoke on a panel with the other three winners at the ALASS (Accelerating Latino Student Success) Workshop following the announcement of the awards. Diana Soto, former Express to Success student and current ESP Gateway to Success tutor, was asked to speak at the opening of the ALASS Workshop.

National statistics indicate that approximately 70% of students entering community colleges are not prepared for college-level studies due to deficiencies in English and math skills. Through a federal grant awarded in 2010, SBCC developed the Express to Success Program to increase the percentage of Latino and low income students who complete their developmental math and English courses and the first transfer-level college course required in English and math.

"Express to Success continues to be one of SBCC's most outstanding programs for student success," said SBCC President Lori Gaskin. "The college is fully committed to ensuring that Latino and underrepresented students get the academic foundation they need in order to complete their community college studies in a timely fashion and transfer to four-year universities. ESP is a transformative program and is richly deserving of this national recognition by *Excelencia* in Education."

Express to Success officially launched in fall 2011 with nearly 300 full-time students
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divided into 10 accelerated learning communities in which specific groups of students took specially selected courses that combined to optimize their learning and prepare them for college-level study. The students in each learning community attend classes as a group, work closely together and receive specialized support inside and outside of the classroom including counseling and peer tutoring.

Since the start, the program has expanded to 17 learning communities in fall 2012 and 21 learning communities in fall 2014. ESP expects to enroll over 1200 students this academic year and plans to continue expanding to serve all students who wish to participate.

Express to Success course completion rates and college persistence rates have far exceeded the SBCC average. ESP students completed two levels of accelerated math or English in one semester at a 40 to 50% higher rate than students taking traditional courses over a two-semester period. Latino ESP students made the largest gains when compared to their peers.

Today's announcement event, *Celebración de Excelencia*, coincided with the release of the 2014 edition of "What Works for Latino Student Success in Higher Education," a compendium of all 29 recognized programs along with the evidence of their success. Through this annual process, *Excelencia in Education* continues to grow America's largest inventory of programs and strategies that education leaders, policymakers, and others tap into to accelerate degree completion among Latinos.

This is the ninth annual release of Examples of *Excelencia*. *Excelencia in Education* has systematically reviewed more than 700 programs to identify and recognize 125 programs and departments – including, for the first time this year, community-based organizations – that demonstrate with evidence that they effectively boost Latino enrollment, performance and graduation.

"Santa Barbara City College is at the forefront of meeting the challenge of improving higher educational achievement for Latino students," said Sarita Brown, president of *Excelencia in Education*. "No longer should policymakers and institutional leaders ask how to improve college success for Latinos – we have the largest accumulation of proven examples and tested strategies that show them how. Today's question is do leaders have the will to put these practices into action."

Examples of *Excelencia* is the only national initiative to systematically identify and promote evidence-based programs and departments effectively boosting Latino enrollment, performance and graduation. It is presented in collaboration with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO). The 2014 sponsors are ACT, Univision, Diverse: Issues in Higher Education, DeVry University, and the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2014, *Excelencia in Education* is a Washington, D.C.-based national non-profit organization whose mission is to accelerate Latino student success in higher education.

