

HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS (Information)

Background

In the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), Congress added Title V, Part A which established the Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) program. Once a college is certified as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, it is eligible to compete for Title V Competitive grants under these provisions.

Establishing Eligibility

To qualify as an eligible institution under the HSI program, an accredited institution must certify that at least 25% of its full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of undergraduate students are of Hispanic origin and at least 50% of those Hispanic students are low-income individuals. In addition, the college's average educational and general (E&G) expenditures per full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate student must be low in comparison with the average E&G expenditures per FTE undergraduate student of institutions that offer similar instruction. (The specific guidelines for filing and establishing low-income eligibility are in the Federal Register, Vol. 72, No. 4, Monday, January 8, 2007; complete eligibility requirements can be found in 34 CFR 606.2 through 606.5. These regulations may be accessed at: http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_o2/34cfr607_02.html.

Once a college has applied and been designated as an HSI by the US Department of Education, it is eligible to compete for funding of competitive grants (currently \$93.3 million is available for FY 2008) under this program. The archived forms for applying during the 2007 fiscal year are available at: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/idueshsi/2007-031s.doc>

Unlike Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) whose principal mission is to provide higher education for African-Americans, HSIs are defined by their Hispanic enrollment rather than their mission. HSIs represent 6% of all postsecondary institutions and enroll almost 50% of all Latinos in higher education. This program is particularly timely because Latinos are currently the fastest-growing segment of the American population, yet they graduate from high school, enroll in college, and earn bachelor's degrees at lower rates than other groups.

There is no official listing of HSIs, but the US Department of Education lists 32 California community colleges and districts as having more than 25% Hispanic FTE based on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS) Spring 2006 survey; the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) lists 40 California community colleges and districts as members.

Purposes of the Act

The act declares that its provisions are intended to:

- 1) Expand education opportunities for, and improve the academic attainment of, Hispanic students, and

- 2) Expand and enhance the academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability of colleges and universities that are educating the majority of Hispanic college students and helping large numbers of Hispanic students and other low-income individuals complete postsecondary degrees.

Authorized Activities and Use of Grants

Grants awarded under the HSI section of the HEA may be used for a broad list of activities including the following:

- 1) Purchase, rental or lease of scientific or laboratory equipment for educational purposes, including instructional and research purposes;
- 2) Construction, maintenance, renovation, and improvement in classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and other instructional facilities;
- 3) Support of faculty exchanges, faculty development, curriculum development, academic instruction, and faculty fellowships to assist in attaining advanced degrees in the fellow's field of instruction.
- 4) Purchase of library books, periodicals, and other educational materials, including telecommunications program material;
- 5) Tutoring, counseling, and student service programs designed to improve academic success;
- 6) Funds management, administrative management, and acquisition of equipment for use in strengthening funds management;
- 7) Joint use of facilities, such as laboratories and libraries;
- 8) Establishing or improving a development office to strengthen or improve contributions from alumni and the private sector;
- 9) Establishing or improving an endowment fund;
- 10) Creating or improving facilities for Internet or other distance learning academic instruction capabilities, including purchase or rental of telecommunications technology equipment or services;
- 11) Establishing or enhancing a program, or teacher education designed to qualify students to teach in public elementary and secondary schools;
- 12) Establishing community outreach programs that will encourage elementary and secondary school students to develop the academic skills and interest to pursue postsecondary education;
- 13) Other activities proposed in the application submitted by a college that contribute to carrying out the purposes of this title and approved by the Secretary (of Education) as part of the review and acceptance of that application.

Conclusion/Next Steps

Given the availability of funds and the wide list of approved uses for the funds under the provisions of Title V, staff at each California community college would be wise to request that their research staff review the demographic data on their students to determine if the college may be eligible to be classified as an Hispanic-Serving Institution. Then, each college which meets the eligibility requirements and applies for formal approval can compete for grant funds which will contribute to the success of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic students at that college.