

POLICY PRIORITY #4

INCREASE POSTSECONDARY ACCESS & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Opening Pathways to Opportunity

CORE MESSAGE

Postsecondary education is a bridge to economic mobility but for too many Latine students and families, the bridge is blocked by cost, immigration status, and systemic barriers. Expanding access to higher education and workforce pathways is not just about fairness; it is essential to North Carolina's economic future.

When Latine students thrive in college and career, our entire state grows stronger.

WHY IT MATTERS:
ECONOMIC GROWTH:

By 2030, Latines will need to earn 6.2 million degrees nationally for the U.S. to reclaim global leadership in college attainment.

WORKFORCE READINESS:

Employers are demanding a highly skilled, diverse workforce. Latine students are a critical part of meeting those needs.

GENERATIONAL OPPORTUNITY:

Postsecondary access can break cycles of poverty, build family wealth, and strengthen communities.



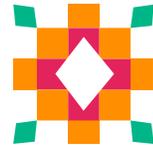
I felt disconnected from my culture and identity and I separated my identity from my leadership. Throughout the connections formed at LatinxEd, I've felt empowered to show up in my leadership spaces with my identity! It's my gift and superpower!

Nohemi Ramirez, Assistant Director of Programs and Services at Belk Center for Community College Leadership & Research

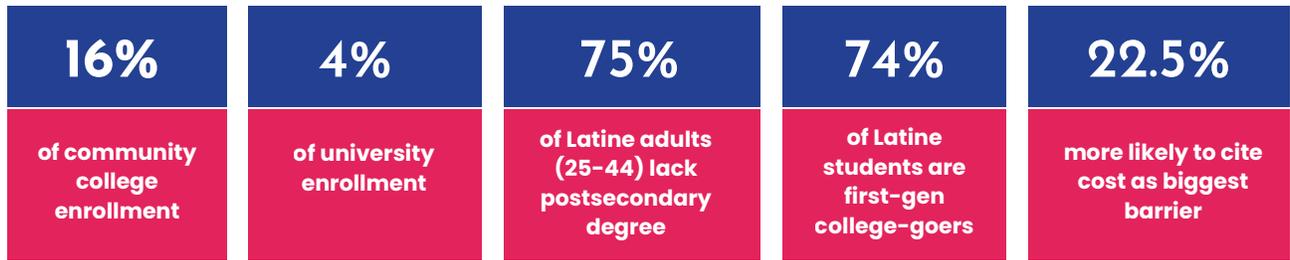
THE CURRENT REALITY IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH:

Latines make up 10% of NC's total population (11th largest in the U.S.). The median age of Latines is 30 years old, disproportionately young, meaning they are central to the state's future workforce.



SEVERE UNDERREPRESENTATION:



SYSTEMIC IMPACT:

- Graduation rates at 2- and 4-year institutions are 5–6% lower for Latines compared to white peers.
- 1 in 5 NC children has an immigrant parent.
- Immigration status often blocks eligibility for in-state tuition and financial aid.
- Latines represent ~30% of the unbanked/underbanked U.S. population, limiting access to traditional financing tools.

FROM DREAMS TO ACTIONS



BOTTOM LINE

LATINE SUCCESS EQUALS STATE SUCCESS:

NC's economic future depends on expanding pathways for Latine students to complete college and enter high-demand careers.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS ARE FIXABLE:

With scholarships, tuition fairness, and better advising, we can close the college completion gap.

EVERYONE BENEFITS:

A stronger, more diverse workforce lifts up all North Carolinians.

CALL TO ACTION

North Carolina must strengthen its postsecondary pipelines by:

1. Expanding tuition fairness and affordability measures.
2. Supporting bilingual FAFSA completion and financial literacy for families.
3. Building more robust workforce-aligned apprenticeship and credential programs.
4. Partnering with HSIs and emerging HSIs to serve Latine students with excellence.

When we invest in postsecondary access, we are not only opening doors for Latine students — we are securing North Carolina's economic future.

POLICY & PRACTICE SOLUTIONS

EXPAND ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY:

- Enact statewide tuition fairness policies for undocumented and DACA students.
- Expand NC Promise Tuition Plan (currently \$500 per semester at 4 UNC institutions) to all universities.
- Increase access to dual enrollment, AP, and honors programs, particularly in rural areas.

ADDRESS FINANCIAL BARRIERS:

- Incentivize FAFSA completion with bilingual navigators for immigrant and first-gen families.
- Develop financial literacy programs tailored to Latine students.
- Support local scholarship funds and workforce development grants.

INVEST IN RURAL & LOW-WEALTH COMMUNITIES:

- Increase apprenticeships and industry-aligned programs to connect Latine students with high-demand jobs.
- Re-engage adult learners with accessible workforce training.

BUILD SERVING INSTITUTIONS:

- Partner with NC's 3 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and 19 emerging HSIs to implement evidence-based practices for Latine student success.
- Support Latine faculty development and leadership pathways in higher education.