

ENHANCING STUDENT SUCCESS

Laura I Rendon

Professor Emerita

University of Texas-San Antonio

Presentation at Corequisite Conference

Austin Community College Eastview Campus

July 6, 2017



THE YEAR 2044



THE PROFILE OF AMERICA IS CHANGING

- **People of color quickly becoming the majority**
- **We have become a nation where race is no longer Black or White**
- **In the year 2000, the Census Bureau 6.8 million people indicating they were multiracial. In 2010 the number jumped to 9 million**
- **More than half of all children under age 5 are of color**
- **By 2044 people of color will be the majority in the U.S.**
- **Low-income people of color tend to face barriers to educational and economic opportunities**

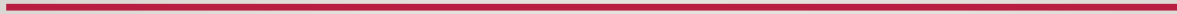
<http://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries>

HOW CAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES ENHANCE STUDENT SUCCESS?

1. Engage Faculty and Staff in Actively Validating and Supporting Students
2. Work With Asset-Based Student Success Framework
3. Work with High-Impact Practices

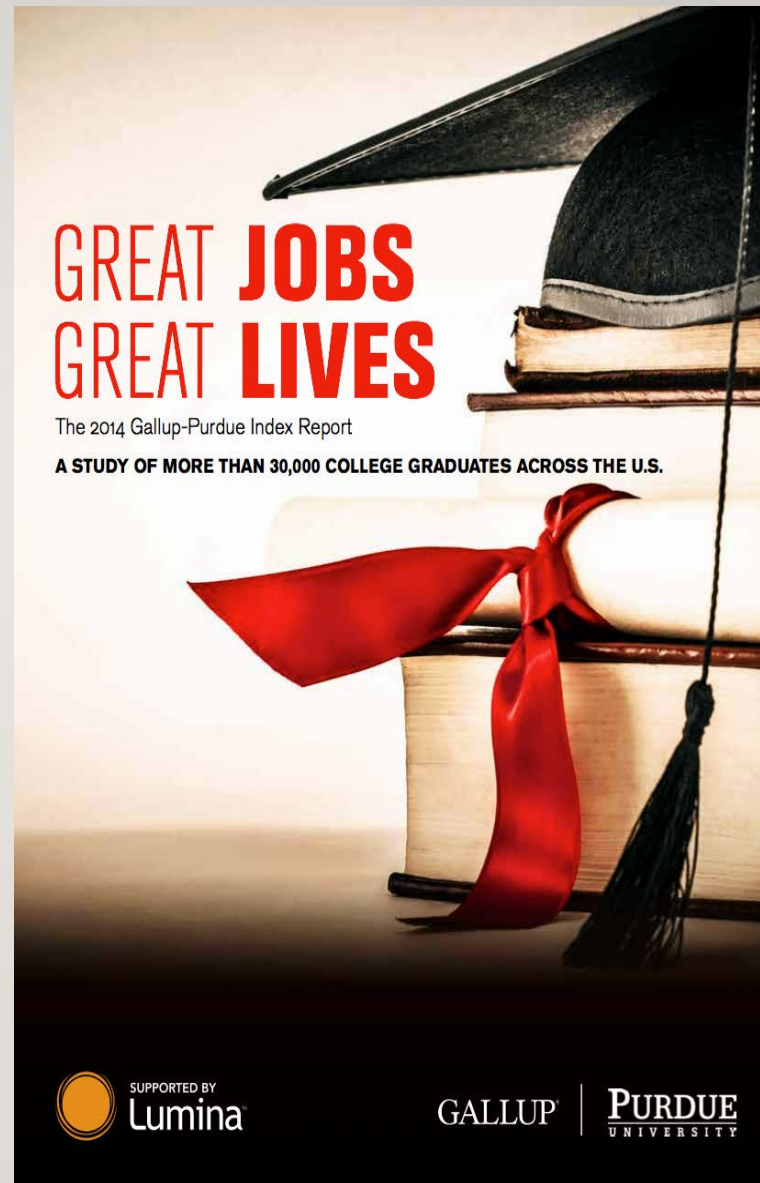


THE IMPORTANCE OF VALIDATING AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS



GALLUP-PURDUE INDEX REPORT (2014)

The Importance of Validation



2014 GALLUP-PURDUE INDEX REPORT

- **Study of more than 30,000 college graduates across the U.S. to determine if the experiences they had in college promoted gains in the workplace and in their well-being.**
- **Key Findings:**
 - If graduates had a **professor who cared** about them as a person, **made them excited about learning** and encouraged them to pursue their dreams, their odds of being engaged at work more than doubled, as did their odds of thriving in their well-being.
 - If graduates had an **internship** or job where they were able to **apply what they were learning** in the classroom, were **actively involved** in extracurricular activities and organizations, and **worked on projects that took a semester or more to complete**, their odds of being engaged at work also doubled (p.6).
 - **Validation, support and deep learning** experiences matter!

VALIDATION THEORY: AFFIRMING STUDENTS

- **Validation is an enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that fosters academic and personal development (Rendón, 1994)**
- **There are two forms of validation:**
 - **Academic -- when in- and out-of-class agents take action to assist students to trust their innate capacity to learn and to acquire confidence in being a college student**
 - **Interpersonal -- when in- and out-of-class agents take action to foster students' personal development and social adjustment**

VALIDATE, VALIDATE, VALIDATE!

- **Student voice and personal experience**
- **Student ability to learn**
- **Student culture**
- **Student strengths**
- **Student identities**
- **Treat students as human beings, not just as students**

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING WITH AN ASSET-BASED STUDENT SUCCESS FRAMEWORK



IT IS TIME TO SHATTER THE DOMINANT DEFICIT-BASED FRAMEWORK

- **Deficit-based thinking pathologizes, stereotypes and marginalizes students (i.e., at risk, marginal, culturally deprived)**
- **Based on grand narrative that parents and communities do not value education and that low-income families are inferior**
- **Theories and models with deficit-based assumptions are not aligned with the experience, strengths and culture of underserved student populations**

TG PHILANTHROPY STUDY AT UTSA

• **PURPOSE**

- To illuminate **the positive and negative aspects of the college experience** of Latinx students.
- To identify **cultural assets Latinx employ** to become survivors and move past obstacles.

• **METHOD**

- Focus groups, N=47
- One-on-one videotaped interviews, N=6

• **CHARACTERISTICS**

- 29 Females (62%)
- 34% Transfer Students
- 70% First-Gen
- 72% Pell Grant Eligible
- 95% Full-Time Enrollment



UPSIDE OF COLLEGE

New Friends

Interactions with
Diverse Students

Exciting
Moments

New Perspectives

New Experiences

THE DOWNSIDE OF COLLEGE: *CHOQUE/CULTURAL COLLISION*

Liminality

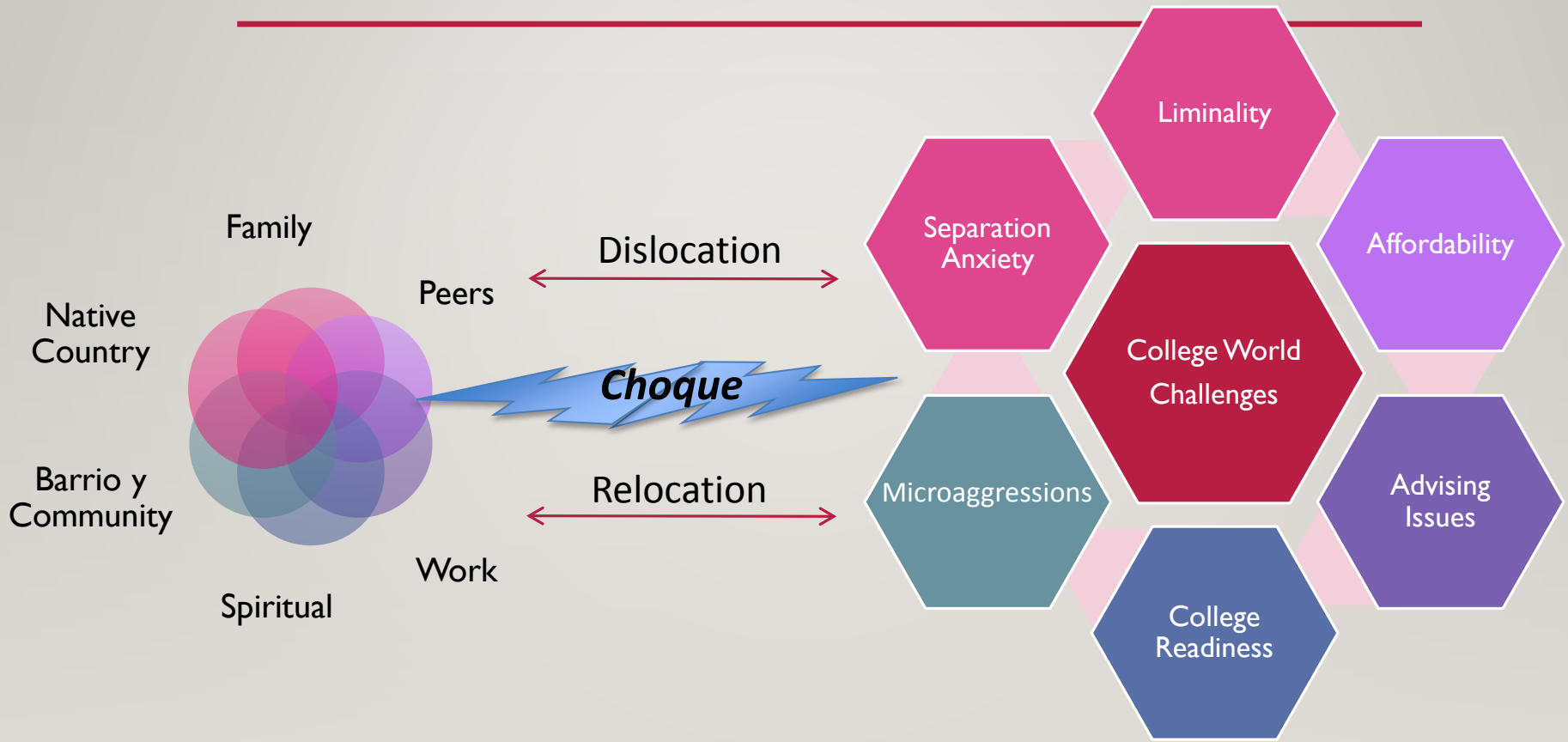
Separation Anxiety

*Choque/Cultural
Collision*

Dislocation/Relocation

Microaggressions

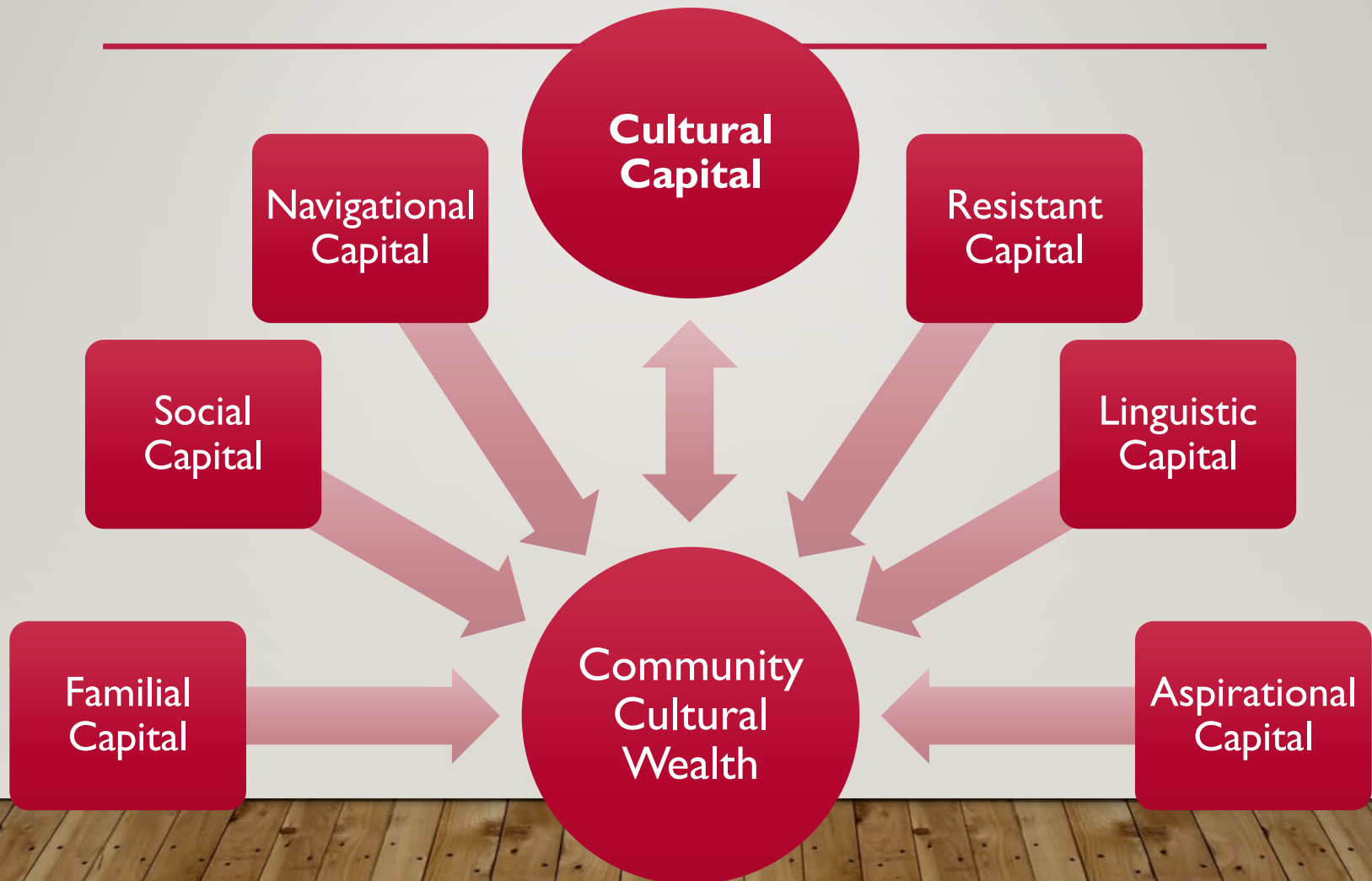
ENTRE MUNDOS/AMONG MULTIPLE WORLDS: NAVIGATING THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE



DEBUNKING DEFICIT-BASED PERSPECTIVES

- What cultural tools do Latinx students employ to succeed in college?
- ***Ventajas*** (Assets)
- *Conocimientos* (Funds of Knowledge)

TARA YOSSO'S COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH MODEL



STUDENT CULTURAL WEALTH

Aspirational

- **Set high aspirations**
- **Recognize value of education**
- **Remain hopeful about future**

Linguistic

- **Employ two or more languages**
- **Engage with formal and informal modes of expression**

STUDENT CULTURAL WEALTH

Familial

- **Model strength & determination of family**
- **Benefit from *consejos, respeto, testimonios y educacion***

Social

- **Form peer networks**
- **Form study groups**
- **Peer validation**

STUDENT CULTURAL WEALTH

Navigational

- **Operate in liminal spaces**
- **Traverse multiple, distinct social contexts**
- **Dislocate and relocate**
- **Adapt to new culture**

Resistant

- **Resist stereotypes; combat and overcome microaggressions**
- **Overcome hardships such as poverty and lack of guidance and resources**

STUDENT CULTURAL WEALTH

Ganas/ Perseverance

- **Develop inner strength; determination to succeed**
- **Recognize and embrace sacrifice made to attend college**

Giving Back

- **Want to complete college because they recognize others have paved way for their success**
- **Know they can be role models**

STUDENT CULTURAL WEALTH

Spirituality/ Faith

- **Employ faith in God/higher power**
- **Develop sense of meaning and purpose**
- **Embrace concepts such as gratitude, goodness and compassion**

Pluriversal

- **Hold multiple and competing systems of meaning in tension**
- **Ability to work with contradictions**

AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL WEALTH (FARMER-HINTON, LEWIS, PATTON & RIVERS, 2013)

- **Familial**—love and support
- **Aspirational**—parents and teachers communicate the power of dreaming and aspiring.
- **Resistant**—students resist inequalities through protests and alternative solutions
- **Navigational**—1) navigating space or making the best of limited resources; 2) navigation college and career pathways; and 3) navigating contradictions.
- **Social**—connection to community and past generations.
- **Spiritual**—religious institutions and their members influence local schools, politics and civic participation.

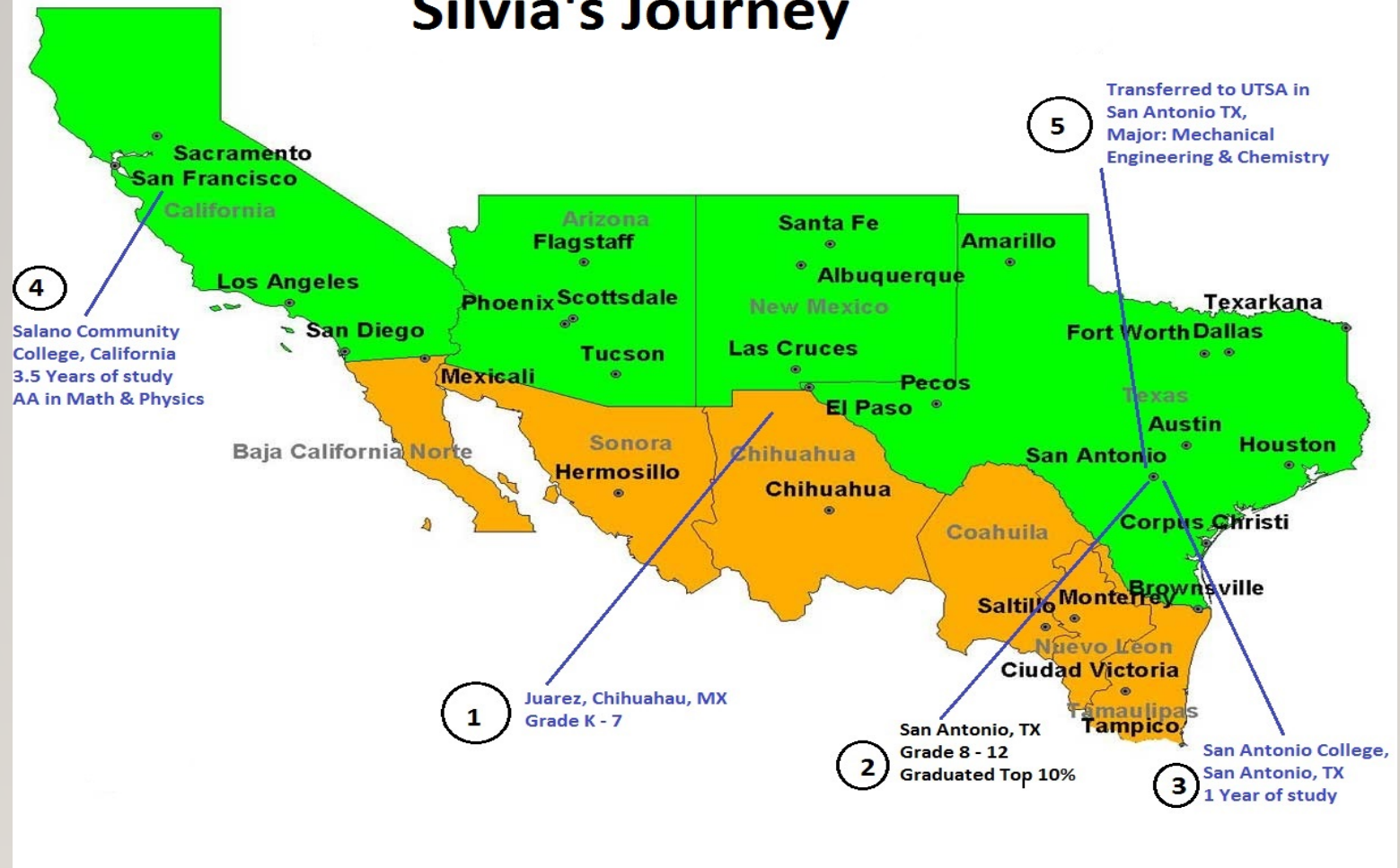
CASE STUDY OF SYLVIA, A COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENT

- **Gen 1.5 student (first 7 school years in Mexico)**
- **Born in Juarez, Mexico**
- **Previously undocumented**
- **Married, no children**
- **First-generation, low-income**
- **No models of college graduates in family**

CASE STUDY OF SYLVIA, A COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENT

- **Fourth-year student at university**
- **Graduated in top 10% of high school class**
- **Transfer student—attended two community colleges before enrolling in four-year university**
- **Associate of Arts (emphasis in Math & Physics)**
- **Majoring in Mechanical Engineering**
- **Planning graduate work in Chemical Engineering**

Silvia's Journey



THE
LATINO
STUDENT'S
GUIDE TO
**STEM
CAREERS**



**ANALYSIS OF
TESTIMONIOS
WRITTEN BY
SUCCESSFUL
LATINX STEM
GRADUATES**

N=19 Essays

12 Females, 7 Males

STEM GRADUATE: ELIAS ARGOTE

“FREEDOM IS WRITTEN WITH BLOOD, AND WORK IS WRITTEN WITH SWEAT”

- **BA Major: Biochemistry and Microbiology; Minor in Biotechnology**
- **MS: Food Science and Chemistry**
- **Female; Immigrant from El Salvador**
- **English Language Learner**
- **Present Profession: Food Service Industry, Quality Compliance Manager**
- **Experienced civil war in El Salvador**
- **Experienced poverty**

ELIAS ARGOTE

- **“My story is the one many immigrants share, a story filled with overcoming obstacles for a better life, and where dreams and our faith in God are the powerful forces that keep us going.” ASSETS: SPIRITUALITY/FAITH;ASPIRATIONAL**
- **“It was a difficult childhood to be born in a society that appreciates males, and being born female did not give me an advantage. My mother was a single mother in a peasant family that had to work very hard to bring bread to the table every day.” ASSETS: RESISTANT; PERSEVERANCE/GANAS; FAMILIAL**
- **“I was guided to a career in science because I wanted to help others and alleviate suffering among my people.” ASSET: GIVING BACK**

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEEP LEARNING EXPERIENCES AS HIGH- IMPACT PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE EQUITY



HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES

HIPS

- **Applied Learning/Experiential Learning**
- **Deep Learning Experiences in and out of class**
- **Validating Experiences**
- **Study Groups**

EXAMPLES

- **Hands-on experiences, special projects that take a semester or more to complete; active involvement in extracurricular activities**
- **Reflective learning assignments such as contemplative pedagogy; service learning in underserved communities**
- **Affirmation and support both in and out of class; peer mentoring and advising**
- **Peer support and validation; peer group learning; collaborative learning assignments**

HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES

HIPS

- **Learning communities**
- **Capstone courses**
- **Research project with a faculty member;
Undergraduate
Research Experiences
(UROs)**

EXAMPLES

- **Ethnic-themed learning communities such as Puente Project & CTN**
- **Culminating, integrative learning experience-- typically last class in a program of study that faculty supervise**
- **Developing and implementing a research study working closely with a faculty member**

THE ENTRENCHED STORY ABOUT WHY MARGINALIZED STUDENTS DON'T SUCCEED IS NOT TRUE

- **Myth is based on highlighting deficits**
- **The myth overlooks how the system acts against success**
- **The myth fails to acknowledge that students, families and communities have significant assets and ways of knowing that they employ to overcome systemic inequities and to create their own models of success**
- **We must write a new narrative of student success grounded in the experience of marginalized students themselves!**
- **Mia Birdsong TED TALK: “Let’s honor the skills, drive and initiative that poor people bring to the struggle every day. They may be broke, but they are not broken.”**