

**Platform Issues  
and  
Recommendations  
for  
Presidential Candidates in  
2008**



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## HACU'S PLATFORM ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IN 2008

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) respectfully submits for consideration by Presidential candidates a series of critical issues and corresponding recommendations. These issues and recommendations are intended to guide Presidential candidates on major concerns related to the education of the more than 45 million Hispanics across the nation, the largest and fastest growing ethnic population in the U.S. Millions of Hispanic voters may decide the next presidential election in key states.<sup>1</sup> These concerns reflect the vision of HACU and its more than 400 member colleges and universities throughout the country; these institutions enroll nearly five million students and two of every three Hispanic students in college today.

The issues and recommendations below aim to elicit an official response from Presidential candidates and influence public discourse among them on substantive matters of special interest to Hispanics.

While significant barriers exist to Hispanic educational success, Hispanic parents have consistently emphasized the importance of higher education for their children.<sup>2</sup> Yet Hispanics continue to underachieve in PK-12 and higher education. For example, U.S. Census data about educational attainment indicate that for every ten Hispanic students entering kindergarten, only one is likely to earn a bachelor's degree. As Hispanics become the majority of new workers entering the U.S. workforce by 2025,<sup>3</sup> the nation as a whole, especially the federal government, needs to immediately increase its investment in Hispanic educational success. The economic well-being of the nation is at stake.

### Issues

1. The persistent federal underfunding of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Hispanic higher education remains a major impediment to Hispanic educational success.
2. The continuing absence of HSIs from federal legislation and regulations that authorize targeted funding for higher education is a barrier to institutional capacity-building for Hispanic student and faculty success.
3. The severe under-representation of Hispanics in the federal labor force, especially in management and executive positions, is an unacceptable disparity. Hispanics are the only ethnic population under-represented in the federal workforce (7.4%, compared to 12.6% of the civilian workforce)<sup>4</sup>.
4. There is a corresponding under-representation of Hispanics among top-level political appointees in federal agencies (especially in those with greater resources for higher education institutional capacity-building, academic programs, support and outreach services, and research). This disparity is equally unacceptable. It raises questions about the political will for inclusion, and creates the risk of Hispanics and Hispanic issues being overlooked in agency policies and practices.
5. Executive Orders from several administrations, and resources to oversee their implementation, have proven inadequate to achieve full Hispanic inclusion.
6. The lack of adequate federal support for greater collaboration between secondary and postsecondary education is a national concern for Latinos, especially at Hispanic-Serving School Districts (HSSDs) and HSIs.
7. At a time when the United States is struggling to create the next generation of scientists and engineers, the lack of federal legislation to permit undocumented immigrant youth that have resided in the U.S. more than five years and have graduated from U.S. high schools to receive financial aid and other federal assistance to attend college, is perpetuating a loss of talent and high-skill workers that the national economy can ill afford.

<sup>1</sup>Between 2000 and 2004, among Latinos 18-29 years of age, voter turnout rose by 21 percentage points, from 32 to 53 percent, according to The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement at the School of Public Policy in the University of Maryland (Mark Hugo Lopez, "Voting Patterns of Young People by Race and Ethnicity, 1988 to 2004," May 2005).

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., Pew Hispanic Center, "National Survey of Latinos: Education," January 2004, Summary and Chartpack, Chart 12 (<http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/7.pdf>).

<sup>3</sup>See, e.g., Mitra Toosai, "A Century of change: the U.S. labor force, 1950-2050," *Monthly Labor Review*, May 2002, Vol. 12, No. 5, tables 1 and 5 ([www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2002/05/art2full.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2002/05/art2full.pdf)).

<sup>4</sup>Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program FY 2005 report, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Jan. 2006.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are numbered to correspond with each of the preceding issues.

1. HSIs, on average, receive only 50 cents for every federal dollar funding all other higher education institutions.<sup>5</sup> HSIs account for 2.5% of all federal science and engineering obligations and only 2.25% of Research and Development dollars and yet account for 8% of all institutions of higher education.<sup>6</sup> It is recommended that:
  - a. A comprehensive study should be directed by the new President through the Office of Management and Budget in collaboration with a HACU advisory board to analyze strategies for closing the HSI federal funding gaps.
  - b. Within six months of taking office, the new President should issue an Executive Order directing all federal agencies to assess their allocation of funds to higher education institutions and programs for greater HSI and Hispanic participation, with appropriate objectives and annual progress reports sent to the White House.
  - c. The President's annual budget request should include targeted programs for HSIs, especially in the science and research intensive agencies, to promote the growth of the pool of Hispanics in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.
2. Numerous federal statutes and regulations focused on higher education fail to explicitly include HSIs and Hispanics for participation in capacity-building grant opportunities, especially for international educational programs. It is recommended that:
  - a. The new President should establish by Executive Order a Presidential Advisory Board on HSIs to advise the White House and the Secretaries of all relevant jurisdictions about appropriate approaches and resources to remedy such exclusions of HSIs and Hispanics.
  - b. The Presidential Advisory Board should be composed of Presidents of HSIs and emerging HSIs and the Chair of HACU's Governing Board, staffed by the Office of the Secretary of Education, and report to the Secretary and the President's Domestic Policy Advisor.
  - c. The President should direct international education and outreach agencies to target funds and technical assistance for HSIs and Hispanic higher education to work with institutions abroad, especially in Spanish-speaking countries, in promoting international education.
3. The new President should issue an Executive Order for all federal agencies to commit to close Hispanic employment gaps at all levels, especially at the management and senior executive service positions.
4. The President-elect should implement strategies to assure the inclusion of Hispanics in Cabinet and sub-cabinet appointments. It should be the goal of the new President to appoint a cadre of top appointees that reflects the diverse face of the nation. This is especially important in the Presidential appointees within the U.S. Department of Education.
5. The new President should charge her/his Domestic Policy Advisor to review Executive Orders and recommend appropriate action to the President for equitable Hispanic inclusion.
6. The new President should work closely with the U.S. Congress to enhance federal legislation and funding to increase and strengthen collaboration between PK-12 and higher education, particularly between HSSDs and HSIs and especially in areas of the country with high concentrations of low-income and underachieving populations.
7. The new President should take the lead with appropriate Congressional leaders to advance immigration reform, especially DREAM Act legislation, to foster educational opportunity and create a highly educated work force for the needs of the national economy.

<sup>5</sup>HACU analysis of 2002-2003 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) information.

<sup>6</sup>HACU analysis of data from National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics, "Survey of Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Non-Profit Institutions, FY 2004."

## Responses from Presidential Candidates

Following are the responses that HACU has received as of January 31, 2008, to the accompanying document, *Platform Issues and Recommendations for Presidential Candidates in 2008*. HACU-member institutions in the U.S., especially Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), are asked to:

- 1) Post the Issues & Recommendations document on the institution's Web site (visit [www.hacu.net](http://www.hacu.net) for PDF).
- 2) Encourage friends of the institution – and friends of HACU -- to convey to presidential candidates their personal support of HACU's recommendations and ask candidates a specific question regarding their response to the recommendations (or lack thereof).
- 3) Submit a letter from the institution to each candidate endorsing HACU's recommendations and ask candidates a specific question regarding their response to the recommendations (or lack thereof).

The help of HACU-member institutions and their many friends and supporters will go a long way in raising awareness of Hispanic higher education issues during the presidential campaign and beyond. Thank you!

### SENATOR JOE BIDEN

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I thank the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities for sharing their views and priorities with me. I share your concerns and am committed to addressing these inequalities.

The Hispanic community has achieved great successes, yet there are still many barriers that continue to challenge the Hispanic community and our nation as a whole. While Hispanics constitute 14 percent of the US population, they are severely underrepresented in the government. As President, I will work hard to ensure that my administration, political appointees, and federal workforce reflect the great diversity of the nation.

In today's competitive global economy, the value and importance of a highly educated workforce has never been clearer. If we are to address the inequalities in our workforce and access to economic opportunity, we must make a serious commitment to ending discrimination in the form of access to educational opportunities. For every 100 Latino kindergarteners, only 11 will obtain a bachelor's degree. We must work to make sure that every child in this country is getting a good education. We can do this by increasing our support to early childhood education and preschool, by making sure there is an effective teacher in every classroom, and by reducing class size.

Half of the achievement gap between rich and poor and white and minority students exists before they even walk into school for the first time. We must fund high quality preschool programs – like Head Start. We need to make sure that Latino children have access to these programs as currently Latino children are less likely than their peers to be enrolled in preschool.

### SENATOR HILLARY CLINTON

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I want to thank the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities for the Opportunity to address an issue

We need to make sure that every qualified student has the ability to pursue a higher education degree. Pell grants and incentives to pay for college haven't kept pace with rising tuition costs. My college ACCESS plan would expand help for middle class families paying for college by creating a refundable \$3,000 tax credit – which would cover the average tuition at two-year public colleges and cover more than half the average tuition at four-year public universities. The ACCESS plan would raise Pell grants to \$6,300 so that, together with the ACCESS refund, low-income students are eligible to receive up to \$9,300 in tuition assistance.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions provide education to more than two thirds of Hispanic college students, and are a key to providing educational opportunities to Hispanic students, allowing them to pursue their educational dreams. As a Senator, I have voted to increase funding to Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and as President, I would work to ensure that these schools received the funding they deserve so that they can continue to fulfill this valuable service.

Every year, U.S. high schools graduate approximately 65,000 immigrant students. Brought to this country as young children, they have grown up in American K-12 schools and share our culture and values. They should have access to in-state tuition. That's why I support the DREAM Act.

I thank you for the opportunity to discuss these issues and look forward to working with your community to address them.

that is of key importance for the future of our nation, and for sharing with me your recommendations.

In a changing, more competitive economy, the opportunity for our young people to attend and graduate from college must be a priority. We must all work to build the kind of America we want to be – an America where every child has the chance to live up to his or her God-given potential.

Today, a college graduate earns nearly twice as much as a high school graduate – an extra \$20,000 per year. For today's 22-year-old, a college degree will mean a million-dollar bonus over the course of their working lifetime. When I am President, we will strengthen all aspects of education to ensure more Latino students have the opportunity to achieve a college education.

**Universal Pre-K** We will dramatically increase access to pre-school programs. Only 40 percent of Hispanic three to five year olds are enrolled in early education programs, compared to 59 percent of Caucasians and 64 percent of African Americans. That is why I proposed pre-kindergarten for all four year old. As part of my proposal, all children from English Language Learner households – 80 percent of whom are native Spanish speakers – would receive free pre-K. By prioritizing pre-K for children from ELL households, we will be helping to give Latino children the opportunity they need to fulfill their potential.

**Recruit and Retain Outstanding Teachers** We will focus on policies and initiatives that recruit and retain more outstanding teachers, especially in schools with large Latino populations. Study after study shows that schools with the greatest needs have the least qualified teachers – teachers who don't have degrees in the subject they are teaching or who don't have specialized training in education. Too often these are the schools with large proportions of Latino, African American, and low income students. Teachers are the most important determinant of quality in a classroom. That is why I have fought to increase the pool of excellent teachers by recruiting talented people from all walks of life – from former military to former IBM executives – to get additional training and become a teacher.

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## SENATOR CHRIS DODD

I believe that it is the responsibility of this country to ensure that all students receive the same access to a quality education, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. Having spent two years in the Dominican Republic as a Peace Corps volunteer and having worked with many Hispanic leaders as a United States Senator, I have had many wonderful opportunities to see the Hispanic community's commitment to educating its children. In a Dodd Administration, children from Hispanic families will have the same opportunities as their non-Hispanic peers and better opportunities than they have today.

**Address the Drop-Out Crisis** When I am President, we will tackle the high school drop out rate. Nationally, the high school dropout rate for Hispanics is more than double that of African Americans and more than three times the rate for Caucasians. I will ensure additional funding is available for the Dropout Prevention Program and GEAR UP and TRIO, which help more Latino young people get the information and preparation they need to succeed at college.

**Support Hispanic Serving Institutions** I will provide more support for Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) who serve a large number of Non Traditional Students. In the Senate, I introduced the Non-Traditional Student Success Act, which provides additional financial, academic, and social support for First Generation students and those who are going back to college later in life, often while raising families and working. These students are quickly becoming traditional and we need to do more to help them succeed.

**A Commitment to Pass the DREAM Act** I will continue to strongly support the DREAM Act, which enables undocumented students to pursue higher education, attend college legally, and pursue legal residency. Access to college is part of the American dream and we have to make it easier for all individuals to get there, and to graduate.

I want to thank the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) for all the work you have done through the years to make college a reality for so many Latinos and I am committed to continuing that work in the future.

For 35 years, I have fought to expand access to high quality childcare, improve our schools, provide job training, help students go to college, support people in purchasing homes and provide assistance to minority-owned businesses. As President, I will work even harder to build a stronger America for everyone. I am committed to a diverse administration that reflects America. Diversity is not a campaign slogan or a catchy phrase...it is a commitment to government that reflects the people it serves.

As President, I will make it a priority to invest in the educational success of Hispanics at the elementary, secondary and postsecondary levels, as part of my larger commitment to improving the educational system at large. I understand that education is the key to lifting families out of poverty and into the middle class. Education is also the key to America's economic competitiveness as a whole. As I have said many times before, there is no more important issue than education – education is the key to solving all the other issues our country faces.

The concerns and issues you highlight in your platform are important ones and as I look to the presidency, I will make your priorities my own. I will continue my efforts to raise standards and expectations for all children in our public schools so that they graduate college and workforce ready. I will increase college access by raising the Pell Grant and negotiating better terms and conditions for student loans. I will build upon my long record of support for Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) by increasing the federal investment in them particularly as it relates to increasing their capacity to train the next generation of students in the science, technology, engineering and math fields. I will

appoint high level Hispanic advisors across all federal agencies and can assure their inclusion in my Cabinet. And, I will work with your leadership to ensure fair immigration reform.

I applaud the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities commitment to Hispanic education and look forward to working with you in the future to bring all of your issues to the forefront of my agenda. Again, I understand that Hispanics will have an important impact on America's future successes in the global economy. I look forward to working with you.

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## **SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS**

Thank you for your letter and for sharing with me the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities' important recommendations.

College is a critical rung on the ladder of opportunity. College graduates not only build better lives for themselves, they also pass on to their children expanded possibilities. I was the first person in my family to go to college and that chance has meant everything in my life. I want every young person to have the same opportunity. That's why in the fall of 2005, I helped start a College for Everyone pilot program in Greene County, North Carolina, an area with low incomes and educational attainment. College for Everyone increased the college-going rate there from 54 percent to 74 percent. As president, I will create a similar national program to pay one year of public-college tuition, fees and books for more than 2 million students. In return, students will be required to work part-time in college, take a college-prep curriculum in high school, and stay out of trouble.

We will all benefit by giving children who grew up here the opportunity to go to college and build a better life. That's why I cosponsored the DREAM Act when I was in Senate and continue to support it. We need to give young people who consider the United States their home, who have worked hard in school and have stayed out of trouble the chance to go to college and pursue their dreams.

I will further work to remove barriers to college by overhauling the student loan program, simplifying the financial aid application process and giving students the

tools and guidance they need to apply to college and get aid. To make borrowing for college more affordable, I will let all students borrow directly from the Department of Education and eliminate bank subsidies on student loans, freeing up almost \$6 billion a year to use to help increasing college access.

Diversity makes schools and workplaces stronger, but the playing field is still not level for people of color. I have consistently supported affirmative action, personally signing an amicus brief that urged the United States Supreme Court to uphold affirmative action at the University of Michigan.

I believe that affirmative action policies are essential to our efforts to address discrimination, expand opportunity and improve diversity. Hispanic Americans have made extraordinary contributions to all aspects of American society and it is long past time that they were fully represented in the government. As president, I will work toward realizing the goal of Executive Order 13171, which sought to improve the representation of Hispanic Americans in the federal government.

There are still two Americas, one favored and one forgotten. But I believe that we can build a country where every single child—no matter what family they were born into, no matter the color of their skin or the country their parents came from—has the same opportunities. I thank you for your dedication to this goal and I look forward to working with you to build one America, where everyone has an equal chance to succeed.

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## **SENATOR BARACK OBAMA**

I applaud the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) for their mission to improve higher education access and success for Hispanic students, for representing more than two-thirds of all Hispanic college students, and for being the only national educational association that represents Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

With over 44 million Hispanics in the U.S., the Hispanic population is young and growing rapidly, comprising over 14 percent of the population. I am proud to have championed efforts to improve educational opportunities for Hispanics – from my days as a community organizer in Chicago, as a civil rights attorney,

and as a U.S. Senator. I have worked with Latino leaders on issues that affect both black and brown residents, from failing schools to illegal dumping to un-immunized children. I understand and am committed to the issues that are important to the Hispanic community.

We cannot ignore the fact that Hispanics have contributed greatly to the social, economic, and cultural fabric of America. From the Hispanic community's deep-rooted history of service in the U.S. military to the battles of leaders like César Chávez for workers' rights, Hispanic Americans have helped make this nation a great one. But despite all of the progress we've made, we know that there is more work to do.

As you know, that work begins long before students reach college-age. It starts with combating a dropout rate that is far too high. When Hispanics are dropping out of high school at a rate more than double the national average, we have to admit that our schools are failing our kids. And we cannot accept that failure. Educators need to be trained to identify the indicators that students may be at risk for dropping out and to intervene early. I will ensure that schools monitor the progress of students learning English and hold schools accountable for making sure these students complete school. I will also expand mentoring and tutoring to help Latino youth stay in school and encourage their parents and family to reinforce that goal. I am a supporter of transitional bilingual education to help our English language learners thrive. I want to make college more affordable by eliminating wasteful subsidies to private student lenders and investing that money in student aid.

We also need to make sure that a college education is within the reach of more Hispanic Americans. This is why HACU is an essential component of promoting Hispanic success in higher education. Although Hispanic-Serving Institutions account for only 5 percent of all institutions of higher education, they enroll over 51 percent of all Hispanics pursuing higher education degrees. I am committed to strengthening and expanding eligible HSIs of higher education to increase their capacity to serve Hispanic and low-income students. Additionally, I will work to make sure a college education is affordable. I have proposed a plan that would eliminate wasteful billion-dollar subsidies that the government has been paying to private student lenders, and will invest that money in student aid. And the first bill I introduced in the U.S. Senate would help make college more affordable for many Americans by increasing the maximum Pell Grant from \$4,050 to \$5,100. In February 2007, President Bush signed into law legislation to increase federal Pell grants to \$4,310 and recently, a bill passed the HELP committee

that would raise the maximum to \$5,100 I will continue to work, as I have over the last few years, until the maximum Pell Grant is raised to \$5,400.

I have also been a leader in the debate on comprehensive immigration reform and believe that our broken immigration system can only be fixed by putting politics aside and offering a complete solution that strengthens our security while reaffirming our heritage as a nation of immigrants. Our immigration policy should be legal, orderly, humane, and safe. And we should give immigrant children the chance to attend college. I supported and helped pass the Illinois state version of the DREAM Act, and I have worked hard with Senator Durbin to move the federal version of the bill through the Senate. I believe that all students, regardless of national origin, deserve an equal opportunity to a high quality public education. Under current law, students who were brought to the United States years ago as undocumented immigrant children and who have stayed and excelled in and out of school have no hope of attending college with affordable in-state tuition.

HACU is rightfully concerned with the lack of Hispanics employed in the federal government and at management and senior executive service positions. In fact, the Government Accountability Office reported earlier this year that only seven percent of the federal workforce is Hispanic. I am running on inclusiveness, optimism and hope, and that will translate into a more progressive presidency on issues of race. I believe that a team that is diverse is a stronger team, and I am proud to say that the team that leads my campaign is similarly diverse. Diversity in any administration leads to more productive, thoughtful collaboration that is reflective of our own nation's diverse communities.

But I will not just make a few high-visibility appointments and declare that my Administration is diverse. I will ensure that Hispanics and other minorities are fully participating at all levels of government. We need a meaningful plan to boost Hispanic participation in the federal government workforce. So often there is an informal network for notice about job vacancies and potential employees, including for government jobs. If Latinos are not part of the government and that informal network, they will find it hard to break in unless changes are made to actively bring them in. As president, I will make those changes.

I greatly appreciate the support I've already received from the Hispanic community, and I want you to know that I'll continue to work on your behalf in the months and years to come.

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### About HACU:

HACU represents approximately 450 colleges and universities committed to Hispanic higher education success in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Latin America, Portugal and Spain. HACU's more than 400 member institutions across the nation enroll two of every three of the two million Hispanic college students and a total of 4.8 million students from diverse backgrounds. HACU is the only national educational association that represents Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) with general headquarters in San Antonio, Texas, a government relations office in Washington, DC, and a regional office in Sacramento, California.