

National Headquarters
8415 Datapoint Drive, Suite 400
San Antonio, Texas 78229
210-692-3805 (voice) 210-692-0823 (fax)
www.hacu.net



July 11, 2014

The Honorable France Córdova, PhD
Director, National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Director Córdova:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and Dr. Joan Ferrini-Mundy on June 23, 2014. I enjoyed the opportunity to visit with you in your new leadership role and to discuss ways to increase the number of Hispanics in STEM careers—starting in schools and transitioning into higher education and the workforce.

As noted during our meeting, the more than 370 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) are the largest category of Minority-Serving Institution (MSIs) that lack an institutional development grant program at NSF. In its FY 2015 proposed budget, the administration described its intent to, for the first time, create an HSI-specific program at the NSF but only for two-year institutions. That restricted approach concerns me because these institutions represent less than half of all HSIs and sends the wrong message to Latino students at 4-year institutions who may aspire to graduate education.

I understand NSF's reluctance to include better-developed four-year HSIs who already compete successfully for advanced funding opportunities. However, in 2011-2012 only 70 of the then 356 HSIs (less than 20 percent) received NSF grants, leaving 80 percent of HSIs out of the equation. Furthermore, NSF funding to all institutions of higher education that year was \$5.23 billion, of which only 2.8 percent, or \$145 million, was awarded to HSIs.

These facts underline the pressing need to develop new and dedicated support for the vast majority of HSIs now overlooked by NSF in order to help them elevate their infrastructure, academic offerings, student support services and collaborations with area schools. I urge NSF to develop such a targeted program open to all HSIs, but especially those that enroll large numbers of low-income students; have limited STEM academic offerings; have limited institutional STEM-specific infrastructure; or are committed to collaborate with local schools/institutions on STEM programming and offerings. These are the institutions that stand to gain the most from NSF funding and to have the biggest impact on Hispanic participation in STEM. This approach is already authorized in federal statute. Section 7033 of the America COMPETES Act (PL 110-69) states that "The Director is authorized to establish a new program to award grants on a competitive, merit-reviewed basis to Hispanic-serving institutions...."

HACU would be happy to work with NSF to help craft program goals and regulations that would assure success in the ultimate goal of increasing Hispanic participation in the STEM workforce. The Department of Labor projects that, between 2010 and 2020, Hispanics will account for 74 percent of the labor growth in the U.S. They will become even more central to the American

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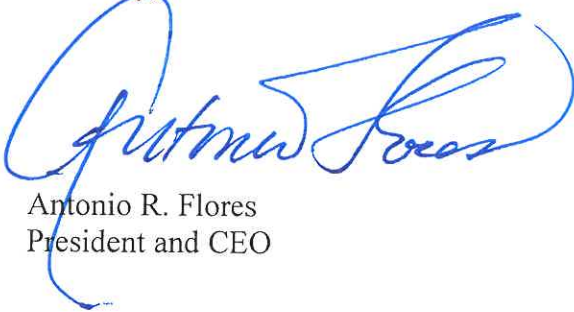
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economy as the century progresses. It is urgent that we address their STEM education needs today if the nation is to meet its STEM employment needs tomorrow.

My office will share with your staff some additional information on HACU's Hispanic-Serving School Districts membership and our efforts on K-12 STEM education. In addition, our proposal for support for a HACU Task Force on STEM is already in preparation. HACU staff and I are at your disposal to answer any questions that you might have.

We look forward to collaborating with you and NSF to address these issues of urgent and growing importance, not only to the Hispanic community, but to the nation as a whole. Please let me know if HACU or I can be of assistance to your successful tenure at the helm of NSF.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Antonio R. Flores". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and end.

Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO

cc: HACU Board of Governors