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**On behalf of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)**

**Testimony to the Committee on Small Business,**  
**Subcommittee on Regulations, Health Care and Trade**

**On Minority and Hispanic Participation in the Federal Workplace and the Impact**  
**on the Small Business Community**

**April 23, 2008**

Good morning Chairman Gonzalez, Ranking Member Westmoreland, and other distinguished members of the Committee on Small Business, Subcommittee on Regulations, Health Care and Trade.

My name is William Rafael Gil and I am the Associate Vice President of Collegiate Programs and Federal Relations for the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, also known as HACU. I welcome the chance to provide insight on the critical role that HACU is playing to assist increase Hispanic representation in the federal government.

**About HACU and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)**

HACU represents over 400 colleges and universities committed to Hispanic higher education success in the United States and Puerto Rico. Collectively, these institutions enroll more than 4.8 million students. There are almost 2 million Hispanics enrolled in college today with HACU member institutions enrolling 1.2 million of these students.

HACU is also the only national educational association that represents Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs).

Our nation's economic and social success rests on the level of skills and knowledge attained by Hispanics. U. S. Census Bureau reports that Hispanics comprise the youngest and largest ethnic population in the United States, making up one of every three new workers joining the U.S. labor force today; by 2025, Latinos will make up one of every two new workers joining the U.S. workforce.

Education, indisputably, is the key. HACU is committed to Hispanic success in education, from kindergarten through graduate school and into the work force of tomorrow.

To this end, HACU maintains more than 30 formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Partnership Agreements with federal agencies, offices, and business organizations to increase the infrastructure at member institutions and create opportunities for their students.

### **The HACU National Internship Program**

One of the most highly regarded programs to introduce Hispanics into careers in federal government is the HACU National Internship Program (HNIP). HNIP began in 1992 with 24 students working in Washington, D.C. The success of this initial endeavor led to the rapid expansion of the program to other federal agencies.

The HACU National Internship Program is designed to enhance awareness of opportunities in the public and private sectors. Through the 10 and 15-week paid internship sessions, HNIP engages academically qualified students from colleges and universities in challenging professional and educational experiences.

During 2007, HNIP welcomed 626 student participants at twenty-five federal agencies and six private corporations in Washington, D.C., and throughout the country. These individuals came from 34 states and Puerto Rico, with 431 interns working in the Washington, D.C., area and 195 in other locations throughout the United States. The average grade point average (GPA) was 3.37. The academic backgrounds of these students were also diverse in that they represented over 100 different academic majors, including engineering, human resources, communications, business/finance, electronics, computer science, law/law enforcement.

The HNIP program has also been recognized for its contributions. In the fourth annual *Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government*, the OPM Director reported to the President of the United States that she was again encouraging agencies to look at all the tools available to them to recruit well qualified Hispanics into the federal government and specifically mentioned OPM's nine-point Hispanic employment plan as a foundation. The HACU National Internship Program is point four of that plan.

Moreover, the OPM Director recognized HNIP and the HACU Cooperative Education Program (HCEP) as "best practice" tools for the recruitment of Hispanics into the federal workforce. Both programs directly respond to Executive Order 13171, which requests agencies to increase their outreach to the Hispanic community and support programs that help address the under-representation of Hispanics in the federal workforce ranks.

The benefit of partnering with HACU is that we complete a lot the ground work for federal agencies by recruiting at member institutions, prescreening and matching a student's academic background with an agency's mission critical occupation needs. We

also coordinate the student's travel and facilitate housing. Through partnering with HACU, federal agencies have been able to offer internship and permanent positions to thousands of Hispanics. They also have expanded federal agencies' name recognition and mission with students, families, and the Hispanic community.

### **Output vs. Outcome – A 15 Year Analysis of the HACU National Internship Program**

Over the past fifteen years, the program has provided professional developmental opportunities to over 7,000 students with superior academic credentials. To measure the impact the program, an independent analysis of past program participants was completed in 2007. The results show that the program clearly increases professional career opportunities for program participants and is truly a "best practice" in the recruitment of Hispanics into the federal government. Survey highlights include:

- As a result of their internship experience, over 90 percent of the participants considered a career with the federal government, a 44-percentage-point increase compared to their intentions prior to completing their internship assignment.
- Nearly 38 percent of survey respondents now work in the federal government.
- 60 percent of the participants reported that their HNIP experience assisted them in finding their current jobs.
- 72 percent of the participants reported that their current employer values the experience they had as an HNIP intern.
- 85 percent of the participants expect that their HNIP experience will be useful to them ten years from now.

The report's conclusion was that the HNIP program has changed many lives for the better. It has fostered learning and development of career abilities and provided the federal government and other agencies with an educated, experienced pool of potential employees.

The survey result proved to be so compelling that they were also recognized by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus in the Congressional Record by the Chair of the Caucus, Congressman Joe Baca.

With such proven results, it is easy to ascertain why this program is seen as an important tool in assisting the federal government increase Hispanic representation, which is the only under-represented ethnic group in the federal government.

Internship programs like the HACU National Internship Program are critical to bridging the chasm that currently exist between college students and federal agencies, by introducing college students to the opportunities that exist in the federal government and addressing their desire to become part of the federal workforce.

### **A Once-In-A-Generation Opportunity**

Since 2000, Hispanics have accounted for half of the population growth in the United States. However, Hispanics are the only under-represented ethnic group in the federal workforce, comprising 7.5% (according to the December 2006 report of the Office of Personnel Management to the President on Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government), versus 12.7% of the Civilian Labor Force. As the numbers and roles of Hispanics in the United States increase and improve, the percentage of Hispanic representation in the federal workforce is not keeping pace.

Studies estimate that the federal government may lose almost half of its workforce in the next decade as the baby-boom generation reaches retirement age. We also know that once individuals get hired into the federal workforce, their chances of remaining in federal employment also increase. We are in the midst of a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure equitable Hispanic representation in the federal government. That is why federal agencies must start to implement effective recruitment strategies immediately if they wish to increase the percentage of Hispanics in the federal government and create a workforce reflective of the United States.

The competition to recruit and hire top young American talent from an increasingly multicultural pool has become fierce. Private industry and the public sector are competing for the same talent. To lose the competition for Hispanics would be a double loss to the federal government: not only would top young Hispanics not enter the federal workforce, but the government's ability to perform its mission well would be constrained.

### **Effective Recruitment Strategies**

The most obvious recruitment strategy is that federal agencies should conduct outreach and recruitment activities where Hispanic students are found in higher numbers. Specifically, federal agencies need to develop strategic partnerships with Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), since they enroll the majority of Hispanics in college today.

Federal agencies should also look to establish and maintain lasting relationships with HSIs who have departments and/or schools where they will find students in their anticipated workforce needs, skills or majors, such as the schools of engineering, language departments, etc. While on campus, they should develop in-depth relationships with career centers and on-campus Hispanic student groups and organizations.

Agencies should establish a visible positive presence on campus and utilize local/regional agency recruitment staff to ensure a presence on campus and to cultivate

long-lasting relationships, while also ensuring diverse representation on the recruitment team.

Agencies should also look to increase the number of Hispanic students that participate in existing federal students programs, which facilitate the hiring of students to permanent employment non-competitively. These programs include the Federal Career Internship Program (FCIP), the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program, as well as federal scholarships.

Lastly, federal agencies should develop an effective student/internship programs with Hispanic organizations, such as HACU, that have access to Hispanic college students and can serve as third party internship providers. We would strongly suggest that internships be paid, as students are more attracted to paid internships.

### **Conclusion**

A truly representative government workforce is an important public policy goal since it affects the government's ability to meet the needs of its citizens. The federal government has a responsibility to ensure that all Americans have access to social and economic programs and services. The underrepresentation of Hispanics impacts the development and implementation of policies and programs and impedes the effective participation of the Hispanic community in federally funded programs, services, and procurement opportunities.

This is why HACU congratulates Congressman Gonzalez on holding a congressional hearing on this important issue. Our entire membership stands ready to assist in this important endeavor.