



Proyecto Comunidad

**Latino Initiative at
National-Louis University**

The State of Latino Chicago

From its beginnings in 1886, National-Louis University (NLU) has stood for opportunity. The opportunity to be the first in your family to get a college degree. The opportunity to give your children a better life. The opportunity to make a real difference in your community.

As the first decade of the 21st century draws to a close, those dreams are in danger of disappearing. Higher education is at a tipping point. Rising costs are making it extraordinarily difficult for Chicago's Latino students and families to afford a college education.

It's time to stop talking about what must be done—and time to shape the future of education for the next generation of Latino students. It's time for a university whose roots run deep in the communities it has served for more than 120 years to step forward and make that future happen. It's time for National-Louis University to step up and lead.

To do what is necessary. To be the university that graduates the highest percentage of Latino students in the city of Chicago. To make the Proyecto Comunidad at National-Louis University the model for recruiting, retaining and graduating Latino students in major urban areas throughout the country.

In 2005, Timothy Ready and Allert Brown-Gort from the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame, with major funding from the Chicago Community Trust, published a groundbreaking study on the state of Latino Chicago. They write in the preface that “Metropolitan Chicago is undergoing a profound transformation from a region dominated politically and demographically by European Americans” to one in which Latinos comprise the largest and fastest growing ethnic segment.

The changing profile of the city is most evident in neighborhoods such as Pilsen on Chicago's west side. Settled in the late nineteenth century by Czech immigrants, Pilsen is now home to a large Mexican-American population and a thriving bilingual business community.

Here are the facts:¹

1. At 20 percent of the population, Latinos comprise metropolitan Chicago's largest minority, numbering more than one and a half million—surpassed only by Los Angeles and New York.
2. Nearly 40 percent of children enrolled in the Chicago Public School system are Latino.
3. More than 20,000 new Latino immigrants, primarily from Mexico, move to the area each year.



—**Matilde Ojeda**

B.A. in Business Administration
M.Ed. in Adult Education
National-Louis University



“National-Louis University has been my savior-sword against my gang life. It has enabled me to complete my destiny. It has taught me that we are luminous beings in order to proceed to our journey, while learning to let go. It has made an impact—to learn about myself.”

—Efrain Gonzalez

Student, Elementary Education
National-Louis University

Latinos and Higher Education

Many colleges and universities have struggled for decades to recruit, retain and graduate larger numbers of Latino students. Gains have been typically modest and hard-won, in part because higher education is not an aspiration of many Latino children and their parents.

Here are the facts:²

1. Only 53 percent of ninth-grade Latino students graduate four years later from high school.
2. Latino children in metropolitan Chicago are likely to be the first in their family to attend college.

Approximately two-thirds of all Chicago-area parents are foreign-born Latinos—and the process of preparing their children for higher education is unfamiliar to many of them.

Here are the facts:³

1. Only one-third of Latino parents completed more than nine years of schooling.
2. About 60 percent of Latino parents did not graduate from high school.
3. Nearly 30 percent of Latino children in metro Chicago are growing up in households where no one speaks English very well.

Chicago's Latino parents and other influential family members must be convinced that earning a college degree will make a real difference in the lives of their children—and that a college education is needed to succeed in today's global economy.

There has long been agreement that there is a strong correlation between higher education and higher earnings. According to the study, “the knowledge-based and services-oriented economy... generally demands a level of technical training or educational credentials that many [Latinos] do not possess. Imaginative policy responses are needed to prevent their becoming trapped in jobs that offer few possibilities for advancement.”

The Need: Increase the Number of Chicago Latinos who Earn a Degree

The challenges Latinos face on the path to earning a college degree are formidable:

Here are the facts:⁵

1. Nearly half of the Latino students attending Chicago's public high schools drop out.
2. Latino students who graduate from Chicago's public high schools are less likely to attend college than other high school graduates in Illinois.
3. After graduating from high school, about two-thirds of eligible Latino students attend community colleges rather than four-year universities.

The need for a stronger resolve and more resources to solve this problem is clear. It's time for new leadership, new partnerships and a new commitment to Chicago's Latino community by one of the city's major universities.

The Goal: Prepare More Chicago Latinos for Professional Careers

Latinos without a degree from a four-year university are not in danger of “becoming trapped” in dead-end jobs in Chicago. Many already are.

*Here are the facts:*⁴

1. Percentage of Chicago Latino men who work as laborers: 13%
2. Percentage of non-Latino Chicago men who work as laborers: 4%
3. Percentage of Chicago Latino men employed in management, business and financial sectors: <5%
4. Percentage of Chicago Latinas who work in production: 21%

In a local economy changing rapidly from its traditional manufacturing roots to one based on knowledge and professional services, Chicago’s Latinos must earn college degrees in greater numbers to strengthen the financial foundation of their families. It is also in the city’s best interest to increase the number of Latinos who graduate from a four-year university. A highly educated, bilingual workforce is an economic asset that should be valued, not squandered, by a city that prides itself on its leadership position in today’s global economy.

Proyecto Comunidad at NLU

An urban university whose mission is access and opportunity is ready to put programs and support systems in place to ensure that Chicago's Latinos earn college degrees in far greater numbers than they do now. A university with deep roots in Chicago will prepare the city's Latinos for careers rather than jobs.

A university committed to the city it calls home and to the communities it serves. A university that believes that there is strength in partnerships and that working with the community is the best way to find ways to increase the number of its residents who earn a college degree.

That university is NLU.

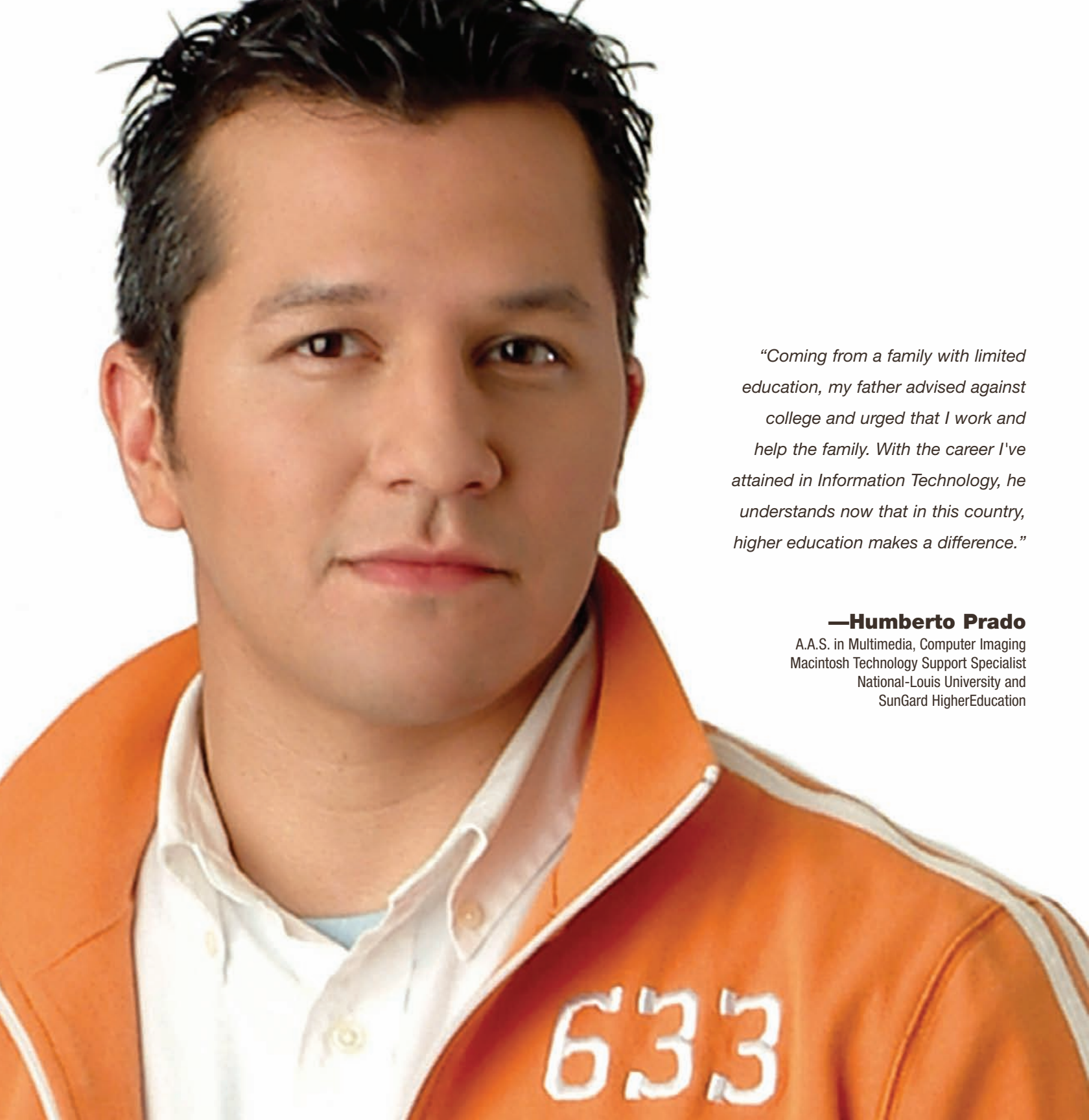
A strong foundation of partnerships with Chicago's Latino community is already in place—and more than 50 initiatives are underway. (Please see Appendix A for a list of NLU Latino initiatives.)

An advisory group has been formed to provide advice and counsel for the initiative. Composed of prominent members of the Chicago-area Latino community as well as presidents of community colleges with large Latino enrollments, the group has been vocal in its support—and has affirmed that NLU has the ability and commitment to follow through and be successful in achieving its goals. (Please see Appendix B for a list of the advisory board members.)

A close-up portrait of a young woman with long, dark brown hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a dark, ribbed top. The background is plain white.

—Olga Govea

Psychology Major
National-Louis University



“Coming from a family with limited education, my father advised against college and urged that I work and help the family. With the career I’ve attained in Information Technology, he understands now that in this country, higher education makes a difference.”

—Humberto Prado

A.A.S. in Multimedia, Computer Imaging
Macintosh Technology Support Specialist
National-Louis University and
SunGard HigherEducation

Here is the plan:

1. **Develop** and sustain a University-wide initiative that will promote access to higher education for Chicago's Latino community—and increase the number of degreed Latinos in the region.
2. **Increase** the transfer and success rates for Latino students making the transition from a community college to NLU.
3. **Re-orient** the NLU culture, services and staff to create an environment designed to support Latino students and their families in pursuing and completing a college degree.
4. **Restructure** enrollment recruitment strategies to attract more Chicago-area Latino students and develop models for other urban universities to follow.
5. **Increase** the number of NLU Latino faculty and staff and develop models for other universities to follow.
6. **Engage** in research and outcome assessment to evaluate the success of NLU Latino students and graduates.
7. **Strengthen** and increase NLU's alliances and partnerships with the Chicago Public Schools, area community colleges and Latino communities to prepare Latino students to pursue a college degree.
8. **Strengthen** NLU's alliances and partnerships with the Latino community to find ways to increase the number of teachers, principals, superintendents and other professional educators working in Chicago's Public Schools.
9. **Capitalize** upon NLU's multiple Chicago-area campus locations to serve the Latino students and their families who are part of the city's out-migration to the suburbs.
10. **Strengthen** and increase the number of partnerships with community and business leaders in specific Latino neighborhoods including Pilsen, Little Village and Back of the Yards.
11. **Create** new merit and need-based scholarships for Latino students.

Appendix A:

NLU/Chicago Latino Community Initiatives and Partnerships (a partial list)

- 1. The Children's Center of Cicero-Berwyn:** counseling services provided to Latino children
- 2. Orozco Community Academy:** English language instruction to Latino parents
- 3. Marquette Elementary School, Metropolitan Family Services, Latino Organization of the Southwest:** programs offered for Marquette Latino students, parents, and the surrounding community
- 4. Oral History Project: Chicago's Pilsen Neighborhood:** a study of cross-generational attitudes among Latinos about education
- 5. The Pilsen Planning Project:** partner in a major Latino community redevelopment initiative
- 6. Pilsen Neighbors' Association:** education task force and university round table
- 7. Spanish Coalition for Jobs Inc.:** helping Latinos qualify for jobs through stronger educational preparation
- 8. NLU's new Spanish Language and Culture Studies major:** for Spanish-speaking students who want to enhance their language skills while earning a bachelor's degree
- 9. El Valor:** offering the NLU MBA program on-site in the Latino community
- 10. Chicago Public Schools/Christa McAuliffe School:** improving reading and literacy skills among Latino students
- 11. Project ALL/Chicago Community Trust:** improving the literacy education provided to second language students, especially Latinos in grades 4-8
- 12. McDougal Family Foundation Transitional Literacy Project:** working with students, teachers and parents at three elementary schools and one high school to coordinate and plan for Latino students making the transition to high school
- 13. Cicero Elementary School District:** improving math instruction for Latino students
- 14. Chicago Public Schools/Pilsen Schools:** preparing leaders for Pilsen neighborhood schools
- 15. Waukegan Public Schools:** enhancing the achievement of Hispanic Students through the integration of art in the curriculum of five schools
- 16. Center for Teaching Through Children's Books:** developing a collection of children's books written in Spanish and those written by Latin and South American authors
- 17. Gads Hill/Pilsen:** familiarizing volunteer tutors of Latino students with reading and writing assessment tools to use in the after school homework center
- 18. McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership:** programming for Latino community child care centers



—Esther Nuñez
B.S. in Business Administration
OIT Technical Support Specialist
National-Louis University
and SunGard HigherEducation



—**Jeanett Sanchez**
Student, Liberal Arts/Social Sciences
National-Louis University

Appendix B:

Proyecto Comunidad Advisory Board


- **Julian Posada**, General Manager, HOY (Chair)
- **Carlos Azcoitia**, Principal, Spry Community School, Chicago Public Schools
- **Marguerite Boyd**, President, Truman College
- **Martha Casazza**, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, National-Louis University
- **Roberto Cornelio**, Chief Operating Officer, Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- **Gail Gordon**, Consultant, RHR International Company
- **Patricia Granados**, President, Triton College
- **Chuck Guengerich**, President, Wright College
- **Abe Tomas Hughes, II**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement (HACE)
- **Terry Mazany**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Community Trust
- **Manual J. Medina**, Officer of Language and Cultural Education, Chicago Public Schools
- **Leslie Navarro**, Vice President for Administration, Morton College
- **Alvaro Obregon**, Manager of Community Relations, The Resurrection Project
- **Richard J. Pappas**, President, National-Louis University
- **Jose Rico**, Principal, Little Village High School
- **Alvaro Romero**, Vice President of Advertising, Banco Popular
- **The Honorable Carlos Sada**, Consul General, Mexican Consulate in Chicago
- **Juan Salgado**, Executive Director, Instituto del Progreso
- **Juan Soto**, Executive Director, Pilsen Neighbors Community Council
- **Domingo J. Trujillo**, Chief Officer, Office of Instruction and School Management, Chicago Public Schools
- **Estelle Walgreen**, Member, National-Louis University Board of Trustees

References

- 1,2,3,4 Ready, Timothy and Allert Brown-Gort. 2005. "The State of Latino Chicago: This is Home Now." Institute for Latino Studies. The University of Notre Dame.
- 5 Doetsch, Douglas, Clare Munana and Alejandro Silva, co-chairs. 2004. "A Shared Future: The Economic Engagement of Greater Chicago and Its Mexican Community." Report of an Independent Task Force. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

It's time to stop talking about what must be done, and time to shape the future of education for the next generation of Latino students. It's time for a university whose roots run deep in the communities it has served for more than 120 years to step forward and make that future happen. It's time for National-Louis University to step up and lead.

To learn more about Proyecto Comunidad at National-Louis University go to www.nl.edu/proyecto or call 888.NLU.TODAY.

A close-up portrait of a young woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing large silver hoop earrings and a dark turtleneck sweater. She is resting her chin on her hand and looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is plain white.

"I grew up on the west side of Chicago, and I am the first in my family to obtain a college degree. With this came the responsibility to advocate for higher education to other young Latinos/Latinas—not only in my family—but also in my community."

—Eva Hernandez

B.A. in Psychology
National-Louis University



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