Graduation Rate Outcomes Study
Part II: Latino/Hispanic Student Success
Northern Arizona University

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Table of Contents

I. Context and Nature of the Visit 4
   A. Purpose of Visit 4
   B. Statistics, Classifications and General Information 4
   C. Organizational Context 4

II. Campus Identified Features Contributing to Success in Retention and Graduation of Hispanic/Latino Students 5
   A. First Year Experience 5
   B. Strengthening Undergraduate Advisement 6
   C. Expansion of Academic Support Programs 8
   D. Instructional Enrichment 10

III. Integration, Leadership, Campus Culture, Context 14

IV. Summary and Evaluation of What Was Learned 16
   A. Components of Success 16
   B. Reasons for Evaluation 17
   C. Key Challenges for the Study Campus 18

Appendix: Constituencies Consulted and Resources Reviewed 19
Executive Summary

Northern Arizona University, located in Flagstaff, Arizona, is the smallest of the three state universities in Arizona. In addition to the main (“Mountain”) campus, the university has a small branch campus in Yuma, Arizona and a sizeable distance learning population across the state. This report focuses on the Mountain campus.

In general, when asked about what seems to be making a difference in Latino/Hispanic student retention and graduation, people on campus cannot point to a single program or set of initiatives. While many initiatives to increase student success exist, none are targeted specifically at Latino/Hispanic students—all have embedded goals for diverse learners. These initiatives are a diverse set of programs, activities, and characteristics, grouped roughly into four categories: the first year experience, strengthening undergraduate advisement, expansion of group-focused academic support programs, and instructional enrichment.

Collectively, however, the programs reflect the institution’s strategy—intentional or not—of providing multiple avenues for student engagement and support, beginning even before students arrive on campus. Once on campus, the NAU community goes to great lengths to ensure that there are many opportunities for students to be involved in academic and co-curricular activities.

The study team feels that there are three important institutional characteristics vital to understand the success that Northern Arizona University has had with Latino/Hispanic student retention and graduation: campus culture, the particular mix of students who attend the institution, and campus leadership.

The culture of the institution allows Latinos/Hispanics to find and/or create a niche on campus where they feel socially integrated. The facilitation of a sense of belonging for Latino/Hispanic students begins with their participation in the summer bridge Successful Transition and Academic Readiness (STAR) program for those who are selected to participate. The sense of belonging for the Latino/Hispanic students continues through the myriad connections that students are encouraged to utilize on campus: learning communities in the residence halls, peer mentoring programs, student organizations, small classes, and personalized attention provided by faculty, to name a few.

The moderately high set of admissions standards ensures that Latino/Hispanic students who choose to attend NAU are likely to be academically prepared as well as highly motivated to achieve academically. While students interviewed by the team stated that they have strong family support for going to college, they appeared to be independent and self directed learners.

Leadership from the President that restructured the organization and reallocated resources to retention and graduation initiatives has resulted in a sustained and focused attention to these issues. Campus faculty and staff are clear that student success is an institutional value and priority. The working relationship between Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management and Student Affairs is especially noteworthy and very impressive. Many of the University’s most successful programs are a direct outgrowth of the cooperative spirit between these two divisions.
Northern Arizona University
30 March 2007

Context and Nature of the Visit

Purpose of the Visit
(BOILERPLATE PROVIDED BY AASCU)

Statistics, Classifications, and General Information
CEO: Dr. John Denis Haeger, President
System Member: No (although governed by the Arizona Board of Regents, a statewide body, the three universities are not part of a system)
Setting: Large Town
Minority Serving Designation: No
Barron’s Admission Category: Competitive
2000 Carnegie Classification: Doctoral/Research Universities—Intensive
Fall 2006 Undergraduate Enrollment: 14,526 (Mountain campus)
Fall 2006 Total Enrollment: 20,562 (Mountain campus)
FY 2006 Revenue from Appropriations, Tuition and Fees: $163,293,300
FY 2006 Revenue from All Sources: $413,003,300

Organizational Context
Northern Arizona University, located in Flagstaff, Arizona, is the smallest of the three state universities in Arizona. In addition to the main (“Mountain”) campus, the university has a small branch campus in Yuma, Arizona and a sizeable distance learning population across the state. This report focuses on the Mountain campus.

Undergraduate admission requirements are the same at the three state universities in Arizona. In-state students may meet regular admission requirements by scoring 22 or higher on the ACT (1040 on the SAT) or ranking in the top 50% of their senior class, as well as having no deficiencies in the required course distributional competencies. Traditionally, NAU has been, as one administrator put it, “at the bottom of the food chain” among the state’s public universities. It does not have a “big time” sports programs as do the two other state universities. NAU, for much of its history, has been the teacher training campus for the state.

Looking at a profile of undergraduates on the Mountain campus reveals the following information for 2006: The median age for freshmen is 18 years, average high school GPA is 3.4 and average ACT score is 22. Seventy-nine percent of undergraduates are in-state residents. There were 1721 undergraduate transfer students compared with 3,694 full time freshmen. In the fall, the percent of all undergraduates receiving financial aid was just over 72%. The percent of Latino/Hispanic undergraduates receiving financial aid was just over 78%. Finally in 2006, there were a total of 365 bachelor’s degrees awarded to Latino/Hispanic students. Of those 260 degrees were earned by Latinas.

In general, when asked about what seems to be making a difference in Latino/Hispanic student retention and graduation, people on campus cannot point to a single program or set of initiatives (and in fact, more than one person expressed surprise at NAU’s inclusion in this study). There are a number of initiatives that are underway, some longstanding, others more recent in origin. None are targeted specifically at Latino/Hispanic students—all have embedded goals for diverse learners. Many of the programs within the features cited below are aimed at transforming student engagement at the lower division level.

None are targeted specifically at Latino/Hispanic students—all have embedded goals for diverse learners.
Often when questioned during the team’s visit, members of the NAU community referred to the characteristics of the students, themselves, to explain the success the University has experienced in increasing Latino/Hispanic student persistence: (1) students are less traditional than Latino/Hispanic students at other institutions, (2) that students who attend NAU are interested in moving a little further away from home and are more independent than their counterparts elsewhere, (3) NAU Hispanic/Latino students are more likely to be middle class than poor or working class, and/or (4) the Latino/Hispanic students at NAU do not want to disappoint their families and thus are more likely to persevere. These observations, pervasive though they were, are anecdotal, and data were not available to the team to refute or support them.

The inability of the campus to specify what, precisely, is making a difference for Latino/Hispanic student persistence is reflected in the diffuseness of the features discussed below. They are a diverse set of programs, activities, and characteristics, grouped roughly into four categories: the first year experience, strengthening undergraduate advisement, expansion of group-focused academic support programs, and instructional enrichment.

Collectively, however, the programs reflect the institution’s strategy—intentional or not—of providing multiple avenues for student engagement and support, beginning even before students arrive on campus. Once on campus, the NAU community goes to great lengths to ensure that there are many opportunities to be involved in academic and co-curricular activities.

**Campus Identified Features Contributing to Success in Retention and Graduation of Latino/Hispanic Students**

**Campus Identified Feature: First Year Experience**

The First Year Experience (FYE) is a year long series of activities and courses designed to acclimate freshmen to the University, thus increasing student satisfaction and retention. All of the following activities are interwoven into the fabric of the FYE: Admissions, Priority Enrollment, Freshman Orientation, the Gateway Student Success Center, STAR, Welcome Weekend, Supplemental Instruction, Learning Communities, face-to-face and online Tutoring, freshman Residence Hall programming, Student Activities programming and Greek Affairs (including two Latina sororities and one Latino fraternity). Descriptions of these activities and evaluative data may be found in other parts of the report. In addition to these varied activities, there are two courses that contribute to the FYE.

FYE 101 is a one-credit graded course designed to assist new students in making the transition to college. Freshmen are automatically enrolled in the course during Priority Enrollment and/or through other advisement processes. Staffing consists of a Coordinator, two 20 hour per week Graduate Assistants and 35 trained upper division undergraduate Peer Mentors. Each Peer Mentor teaches two sections with a student enrollment of 20-25 per section. Classes meet in 50 minute sessions twice per week for the first month and once a week for the second month. Students meet one-on-one with the Mentor during the third month. Approximate annual cost of the program is $46,000 plus the Coordinator’s salary.

EPS 101 is a three credit graded course required for conditionally-admitted students. The primary focus of the course is on learning and study skills. The course is taught by
12 Educational Psychology Graduate Assistants under the supervision of a Faculty Coordinator. Section size varies between 20-25 students. Approximate cost of the program is $108,000 plus the Faculty Coordinator’s salary.

No data were available to the team regarding differential student success rates or retention as a result of having been enrolled in either FYE 101 or EPS 101. It should also be noted that personnel from both these courses are also heavily involved in other aspects of the Freshman Year Experiences such as Freshman Orientation and Welcome Weekend.

All of these activities are coordinated by the Freshman Year Coordinating Committee. The institution has spent considerable time and effort to facilitate a smooth transition to college. These activities represent an impressive cooperative arrangement between Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (EMSA).

Campus Identified Feature: Strengthening Undergraduate Advisement

Gateway Student Success Center: After a decentralized and unsystematic set of practices with respect to student advisement was deemed ineffective, the Gateway Student Success (GSS) Center was established in January 2003 as the follow-up to recommendations of the Taskforce on Advising and Career Planning. The mission of the Center is to assist students to develop their potential and live lives of purpose. The Gateway Student Success Center is a centralized advising facility for first year and incoming transfer students as well as students who have not declared a major. Within a year of its establishment, Career Services was folded into the GSS Center and the organization was charged with integrating career and academic advising services. Over time, additional responsibilities have been added to the Center’s charge, including pre-med advising. The center has responsibility for several retention-related initiatives such as the Rapid Alert Program (RAP), the new Student Readiness Inventory (a proprietary ACT product which the campus piloted), the “Finish in Four” graduation guarantee, and support for academically suspended students.

The GSS Center serves 3800 freshmen and undeclared students with a staff of 30 professional personnel. The Center currently has one Latino/Hispanic staff member and two others fluent in Spanish. In addition to their advising and career service duties, a number of advisors teach targeted one credit hour seminars, for which they receive supplemental pay. The Latino/Hispanic population making use of the GSS Center is reflective of the student population in general. The advising ratio is 285:1. All students, including Latino/Hispanic students, are assigned to advisors based on academic area of interest.

Administratively, the GSS Center reports to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies in Academic Affairs. Funding for the Center is provided by the university. Total budget is approximately $1,500,000 a year. There is every indication that the University intends to continue and expand the funding for the GSS Center. A proposal to the Arizona legislature for special funding for retention and graduation initiatives has recently been submitted by NAU.

Because the activities of the GSS Center are so new, data on the first cohort of students are not yet available. However, the staff is in the process of developing a database and an assessment system that will yield evidence of the impact of the Center
**Priority Enrollment:** One outreach effort of the GSS Center is the Priority Enrollment program. The process is initiated once the student has paid a deposit for matriculation to NAU. The GSS Center staff sends the student a series of postcards asking the student to log on to the Priority Enrollment website to complete a questionnaire providing information that will be useful in academic advisement, including a general intended area of study. Based on the information provided by the student, GSS Center advisors build an entering student’s tentative course schedule and register the student for courses prior to their arrival for Freshman Orientation. Normally included in the course schedule is FYE 101. Incoming students are given an appointment with their advisor during the second day of Orientation. At that time, the student has the option of revising his or her schedule in consultation with the advisor.

The Priority Enrollment program has the effect of beginning a relationship between the institution and Latino/Hispanic students even before they arrive on campus. Although it appears to be very time intensive for staff, the end result is positive for the students and the institution. The change has also resulted in a better-run Orientation program with fewer changes to students’ academic schedules. It has created points of contact for students and families and a model of pro-active behavior that students learn from for future semesters.

**Rapid Alert:** The Rapid Alert system has been in place for six years. Its purpose is to provide early intervention that will assist students in making appropriate mid-course corrections, and thus ensure success in the course. Rapid Alert is an on-line system for faculty to report students experiencing academic difficulty related to course assignments, attendance, quizzes, exams or other issues. Although the current system only serves selected, at-risk populations, there are plans to expand the system to all students. Approximately 1000 students are served by the Rapid Alert system each semester; no data are available on the number of those students who are Latino/Hispanic. Since 20 GSS Center staff advisors follow up on the faculty reported student issues, the cost is folded into the GSS Center budget. As is with the case with the GSS Center, evidence of the impact of the Rapid Alert system is dependent on data collection still in progress.

**Finish in Four:** To be eligible for the new Finish in Four program, freshmen must come in with a minimal level of competence in mathematics and English, declare a major upon matriculation, and follow the degree progression outlined for that major. Participants are required to meet with an advisor each semester and must register in a timely fashion. The University, in turn, guarantees student enrollment in the courses specified by the degree progression plan. If a student follows the academic plan developed with advisement and fulfills his/her commitments to the program (regular consultation with advisors, successful completion of courses, timely enrollment in courses, and so forth), and does not finish in four years because of inadequate advisement, unavailability of course offerings, lack of classroom space or other circumstances not within the control of the student, the University will provide an appropriate alternative or will assume the cost of tuition to complete the required course in a subsequent semester.

Responsibility for implementation of this particular feature is also housed in the GSS Center and program activities are performed by their staff. The cost is, therefore, folded into the GSS Center budget. Since 2007 is the first year of the program, no data have yet been collected regarding its impact.
Campus Identified Feature: Expansion of Academic Support Programs:
Academic support programs have been identified as part of a larger set of interventions that lend themselves to improved retention and graduation rates for all students, and, it is presumed, for Latino/Hispanic students. The specific linkages between programs and Latino/Hispanic rates of graduation has not been clearly established, but anecdotal reports from faculty, staff and students indicate that the wealth of academic support programs available to students does contribute to Latino/Hispanic students’ success.

NAU has developed a set of interventions targeted to “gatekeeper” courses, which include those courses with high drop/failure/withdrawal (DFW) rates that are also foundational or pre-requisite courses for majors. As a result, these interventions are targeted to “high risk” courses rather than “high risk” students.

Among the academic support services identified by NAU are supplemental instruction, tutoring, special support programs in the sciences, and faculty development activities. Each of these is addressed below.

Supplemental Instruction: Supplemental Instruction (SI) has been a key focus of NAU’s academic support programs, with increasing participation and, according to early indicators, increasing success. Supplemental Instruction is becoming more embedded in the full range of early classes, so that it is becoming an expected support available to all students, rather than an addition only for those students at risk. Tutoring and learning center services (described below) have also become more prevalent (and less stigmatized) reaching a critical mass and becoming an accepted part of the learning enterprise. There is apparently a fluidity among this suite of services, with particular interventions deployed based upon student need or faculty request so that what is offered through tutoring one year may be targeted for SI in another year. Some particularly problematic areas may be supported across multiple programs. For example, Supplemental Instruction, tutoring and math labs are all used in support of mathematics courses.

NAU initiated SI in 1998 with funding provided by the Minority Student Development (MSD) program of the National Institutes of Health/National Institute of General Medical Sciences. The goal was to provide additional academic support for minority students in gatekeeper/gateway/pathway courses in the STEM disciplines, in this case, biology, chemistry, and physics. That program served 800 to 900 students per semester in 10 to 12 course sections. Data from the MSD program showed that SI participants earned grades that were one-third letter grade higher than non-participants, with a larger effect for minority students.

SI at NAU appears to be benefiting from a healthy bandwagon effect. After initial success in the sciences, SI spread to other high risk and/or high volume courses, in part because of (1) faculty testimonials and student success (more As,Bs,Cs; fewer DFWs), (2) student affairs professionals who are very knowledgeable about tutoring, SI and the robust effects of the latter, and (3) a continuing, cumulative history of successes in various disciplines.

SI was selected by NAU because it is designed to reduce the DFW rates for all students enrolled in the University’s most high risk and/or high volume courses and is an internationally used model that has demonstrated success for over 30 years. At NAU, SI
Northern Arizona University  
30 March 2007

has targeted courses with DFW rates of 25 percent or higher and class sizes of 100 students or over. SI represents one of the most successful collaborations generally between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, and this is true at NAU as well. At NAU, SI has joint leadership: a faculty member from Biological Sciences who directs the Class Linked Academic Support Program and the Director of the Learning Assistance Center

SI was expanded in Spring Semester 2006 with funding from NAU’s Vice Provost of Undergraduate Studies to include an additional 13 courses (with 17 faculty members assisted by 17 SI leaders in 24 sections spanning four Colleges).

Results from the Spring Semester expansion showed that SI participants’ course grades were an average of .4 grade points higher than those of non-participants. SI participants’ rate of DFW was 13.5 percent compared to 27.7 percent for non-participants. While the results of SI were not favorable in all SI supported courses, the overall trends indicate that SI remains a robust academic support program at NAU. For the 2006-2007 academic year, 57 classes were covered by SI.

_Tutoring and Other Supports through the Learning Assistance Centers:_ NAU has worked hard to bring academic support to all students, establishing two Learning Assistance Centers (LACs) on opposite ends of campus and locating learning centers inside four residence halls. Tutoring offered through these centers is free to all students and is specifically focused on problem courses at the freshman and sophomore level, listed on the Learning Assistance Center website. Online tutoring is available after hours and on weekends, providing internet connections to a live tutor.

Students can make individual appointments or work in groups with a trained peer tutor. In addition to course-specific tutoring, there is a walk-in math lab on the north campus and course specific math tutoring available in the residence halls. One student observed that the targeting of specific classes and the prevalence of the services have reduced the stigma that is often attached with asking for assistance. Asking for help has become an expected activity associated with certain classes.

A study skills specialist also works with the Learning Assistance Centers to provide a more generic set of skills to students facing academic challenges. These services are provided through workshops and individual appointments. Faculty can also schedule sessions during class time. Topics include time management, effective study and review, tips for writing papers, test taking strategies, dealing with test anxiety and preparing for final exams. Students are also encouraged to use the labs to do homework and as a place for study groups to meet.

The LACs represent a tangible and high profile commitment to student academic success. However, our conversations with present and former students did not focus on the academic supports as most important. The importance of social connections, peer groups, mentors and personal attention were much more likely to be identified by the students as the key elements for success.

Special Support Programs in the Sciences and Engineering: Two science-related programs were mentioned by NAU as contributors to the level of Latino/Hispanic student success. These include the Multicultural Engineering Program and the Initiative to Maximize Student Diversity. Both of these grant-funded programs were initiated in the mid to late 1990’s and provided impetus for many of the programs, such as
Supplemental Instruction, that have been expanded to the rest of the campus. While offices for these programs are still located within the home departments of science and engineering, they are closely linked to the generic student support services. It appears that students move seamlessly between project specific activities and the more generalized campus supports. These programs seem to have contributed in three key ways: as pilots for academic support programs; as a visible commitment to minority recruitment and support in these disciplines; and as a vehicle for connecting students with faculty mentors for research.

**Faculty development:** NAU has a vigorous, broad based faculty development program. Three years ago, a .25 faculty position was funded to lead the effort; this has now expanded to a full-time funded position. In addition, faculty development is enhanced by at least two other units, namely eLearning (instructional technology) and Academic Assessment. The Faculty Development director is currently conducting a large formal study of 100 full time faculty, each interviewed for 30-40 minutes. Called *Insight*, the project's report to the campus is due to be released in April, 2007.

Faculty development activities focus on best practices (e.g., effective teaching involving controversial issues) and other topics suggested by faculty. The needs assessments conducted to date have led to an array of faculty development offerings, usually short term, non-cohort programs, such as panels (including student panels) and presentations by NAU community members and external consultants. In addition, the Faculty Development program offers retreats focusing on teaching, mentoring programs for faculty, and several mini-grant programs.

A four-part symposium – Dimensions of Diversity – was offered during the 2006-2007 academic year, including one session where minority students were asked to reflect on their learning experiences at the university. By attending to the learning experiences of students of color, faculty development efforts at NAU are likely to have contributed to building a more supportive campus and classroom climate for minority students, including Hispanic/Latino students, and therefore, increasing their success.

In formal activities, and elsewhere, faculty are being asked to understand curriculum from a student viewpoint, including the reality that students don't often see their own stories reflected in course content. Change is taking place. For example, Latino/Hispanic and Native American authors, some of whom have come to campus to read their own works, were included in American Literature courses. In addition, effective fall 2005, undergraduate students are required to complete a university-wide diversity requirement: three semester hours of US ethnic diversity and three hours of global awareness. A minor in Ethnic Studies has also been developed in response to serving an ethnically diverse student body.

**Campus Identified Feature: Instructional Enrichment**
There are a number of programs that combine academic and social supports to connect students to the campus and build a sense of academic competence. A strong intentionality about helping students in these programs to find employment on campus is an important part of the connection, providing both financial support and continuing interactions with faculty and staff. The benefits most often mentioned by students are the ties made to mentors and peers in establishing a "home base" from which to operate. The social and emotional connections are clearly the stronger...
elements in these programs from the students' perspectives. In addition, instructional enrichment also engages faculty and staff, providing opportunities for employees to interact with diverse university constituencies and providing support for professional development that ultimately has as its goal the enrichment of student experiences at NAU. Many instructional enrichment programs are collaborations among and between units across campus.

Successful Transition and Academic Readiness (STAR): The STAR program is a five week summer bridge program for incoming freshmen targeted toward students who meet one or more of the following criteria: low income, first generation college attendance, and/or ethnic minority background. The five week program is followed by two years of peer advising. This program has been in existence since 1989 and was originally funded by the Arizona Legislature. The institution now funds the program. The STAR program is administered through the Multicultural Student Center, which has a Director, Assistant Director, Program Coordinator and an Administrative Assistant on staff. In addition, student “graduates” of the program are employed as peer advisors and summer assistants. The program represents a collaboration between EMSA and Academic Affairs.

STAR participants are chosen selectively. Typically there are between 350-450 applications for approximately 150-200 slots; this year’s cohort numbered 180. Also typically, 70% of STAR participants are students of color, 50% are lower income, and about 70% are first generation college-attenders. STAR students make up 20% of the overall ethnic minority population and about 35-40% of Hispanic/Latino, first time, full time freshmen.

The program emphasizes both academic and social integration, helping incoming students to make connections in a broad variety of campus contexts. This is not a program for academic remediation—students enter with a wide range of preparedness, but must otherwise qualify for admission to NAU.

During the five week session, students enroll in six hours of academic courses, typically Liberal Studies (core curriculum) courses that do not require placement testing. The courses are coordinated by faculty, although most instructors are graduate students who have received additional diversity training. Instructors often teach in the program multiple times over the course of their tenure at NAU. One of the courses is English 110, Rhetoric and the Media, which features content concerning treatment of minorities in a variety of mass media.

STAR students meet key employees and staff members that will support them through their college careers. Student participants become resources to other students (both current and future). Students receive advisement during the summer program and after its completion, meet peer counselors, and faculty.

The STAR program helps to recruit students through a series of “STARs on the Road” meetings at high schools around the state. Staff works with parents and students to complete admission materials, FAFSA forms, and other paperwork to help smooth the college application process. Recruitment efforts by program staff, in fact, are focused on the parents. The bilingual abilities of staff and the direct connections to parents (as reassurance) are seen as selling-points for NAU. The STAR Orientation program also encourages family participation (cost is $15 including meals for family members and
supervised activities for younger siblings). Staff also hosts a series of fall semester events for high school seniors to help increase awareness of the program and NAU more generally.

Participants receive funding to attend the summer program on the basis of their ability to pay; most participants receive full scholarships, although some may pay up to $500 for the program. In previous years (until 2004), a foundation-funded scholarship/leadership program for a small cohort group resulted in an approximately 80% graduation rate among awardees. No replacement funding has been identified to reinstate this scholarship program, but efforts to do so are ongoing.

STAR students persist at higher rates at NAU than non-STAR participants. For Latino/Hispanic students, 2005 STAR students’ first to second year retention rate is 20% higher than the NAU first year rate for Latino/Hispanic students (89% vs. 69%), and over seven years, Latino/Hispanic STAR students first to second year retention rate is eight percent higher than the NAU first year rate for Latino/Hispanic students (73% vs. 65%). STAR “graduates” tend to go on to be highly involved at the University in student government, as student workers in programs and departments across campus, and in other ways.

Residential Life: Residence Life staff indicated that one factor in the retention of Latino/Hispanic students might be the high residential rate for freshmen at NAU (90%). National data indicate that residential students are generally retained at a higher rate than non-residential students. However, at NAU it is not only the fact of the high on-campus residential rate that seems to be making a difference for the Latino/Hispanic students, but also the creative and intentional integration of other student support systems into residence hall life.

The residence halls have taken on several responsibilities that, at other institutions, are handled by an advising staff with limited exposure to students. The approach is dynamic and unique, providing many opportunities to interact with students and, in the process, provide critical services needed for student success. However, it is the focus on relationships with hall staff instead of on the specific services or activities which may ultimately have a greater impact on student retention.

Residence Life is focused on providing resources as needs arise. Resident Assistants (RAs) help connect students to resources when students recognize the need (e.g., after the first exam). Residence Life has four target areas in its strategic plan: diversity; belonging; academic outreach and the physical environment. The fact that residence life staff members can recite them easily and relate them to their work makes it clear that the plan is more than words on paper.

Learning Communities are another dimension that the residence halls have used to help students to make academic/social/community connections. Learning communities have been championed and developed as a place to belong more than as “study groups.” (The ‘community’ comes before the ‘learning.’) Many students choose to live on campus as a result of reports by their peers that the experience is positive.

Residence Life has ensured that the staff is well trained and that students have the opportunity to be involved in learning activities. Training extends beyond academics and student support services to topics including global issues, privilege, personal bias,
gender, spiritual, and racial humor. As a result of this approach, students are able to live, collaborate, interact, and study with a variety of students regardless of background.

In an effort to stay abreast of issues and services needed by students, the Residence Life program continuously receives feedback from students in the form of surveys, RA discussions with students, leadership skill building, and service programs. Staff also works closely with new students as they move into the halls, creating a welcoming and helping environment.

Many of the activities mentioned above are a result of funds generated by students living in the residence halls. Generation of funds for these purposes would not be possible if units were not filled and productive. High occupancy rates are accomplished by keeping fees reasonably priced, providing alternative room/board options for students, allowing students to request specific accommodations, and establishing policies that are student-friendly and healthy. Residence Life has been active in working to continue to develop programs to assist students within the residence system through programming, assignment of rooms to groups/clubs, tutoring, intrusive advising/discussions with students, and providing students with ways to encourage student/faculty communication.

Student Organizations: The perception of ethnically diverse faculty interviewed is that NAU does not directly recruit Latino/Hispanic students. According to these faculty members Latino/Hispanic students are not deeply involved in campus organizational life. Student organizations such as M.E.Ch.A. and sororities and fraternities, make small efforts to engage Latino/Hispanic students.

In spite of the lack of involvement with many of the larger scale student organizations, Latino/Hispanic students manage to make connections within their own cultural groups and participate in meaningful activities both on and off campus. There appear to be differences in philosophy and purpose which limit the collaboration among Latino student groups. However, their efforts do not go unnoticed. At the same time, there seemed to be evidence of a lack of support for the Latino organizations’ missions and purposes by the larger student organizations including student government.
Integration, Leadership, Campus Culture, Context

A sudden drop in enrollment of approximately 2000 students in the Fall Semester 2001 along with a budget decline of about $5 million garnered the attention of Northern Arizona University leaders about the importance of recruitment and retention. As a result, the university became much more focused on the success of its students. While this increased attention to student success may not explain the relative success of Latino/Hispanic students, NAU’s ensuing focus on retention and graduation portends well for the continued and probable increased success of all of its students, including Latino/Hispanic students.

NAU’s attention to student success comes from the very top both externally and internally. For example, the Governor and Legislature have increasingly tied state funding to increased retention and graduation rates. Arizona’s Board of Regents focuses on retention and graduation rates in recognition of the principle that access without corresponding completion misses the mark. Student success is part of the Arizona Board of Regents strategic plan and the Northern Arizona University strategic plan as well.

President Haeger indicated to the team that his annual performance evaluation includes increased student retention and graduation. As a result, he is making increased student success part of the annual performance evaluations of his vice presidents. If the trickle down effect proceeds, demonstrated increases in student retention and graduation rates would become part of the performance evaluations of personnel at every level of NAU.

In addition to the leadership of the President, the university benefits from the strong leadership of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, and the Vice President for EMSA who have facilitated an exceptionally collaborative relationship between Academic and Student Affairs. This collaboration is expressed as a “focus on student success” in academic affairs and a “focus on graduation and retention” in student affairs, resulting in both the personal attention students get from faculty and the continuing-improvement focus that is being cultivated in student affairs. Hilda Ladner, Director of the Multicultural Student Center, has played a central role in facilitating minority student success, weaving interpersonal connections throughout a range of programs and services and building a strong cadre of peer mentors and student advocates who help to carry the culture of support into all areas of the campus.

As a part of the restructuring that began in response to previously declining enrollments (and concomitant budget rescissions), a new Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs was hired in 2003 with the charge to increase minority and out of state undergraduate enrollment. The new Vice President initiated several strategies which have resulted in increases in undergraduate enrollment and retention. As noted above, none of these strategies are specifically targeted toward Latino/Hispanic students.

While the State of Arizona supports higher education relatively generously, it does not support student aid to a high degree. At NAU, 14 cents of every in-state tuition dollar are set aside to support aid for financially needy students. Under the previous administration, the FYR tuition discount rate was approaching 70%, leaving few dollars for student assistance. Under the new President and Vice President for EMSA, the model has now changed such that the scholarships awarded are now a fixed amount,
tuition waivers have been largely discontinued, and the discount rate is now closer to 40%. Enrollment has increased under the new model.

The VPEMSA has promoted a vision that recruitment should focus on a marketing strategy to attract student for whom NAU is a good “fit.” Recruiters speak to parents about sending their children to a college “close to home.” They promote the individualized attention the students receive at NAU with its small class sizes and the multiple connections that students make across campus with faculty and staff. In other words, NAU is promoted as a safe and comfortable place for students. The end result is that parents feel at ease sending their children to the institution. This strategy is based on two premises: (1) “fit” is a key piece of student satisfaction and without it, students will not be retained, and (2) parents are partners in the college selection/persistence process.

As a rule, the integration of programs and administrative divisions seems to arise from the pervading student-focused culture rather than significant programmatic efforts at coordination. Recently, however, two groups have undertaken more overt efforts at coordination and collaboration. These include the Advisory Council on Diversity and Equity and the First Year Coordinating Council.

In the summer of 2006, the President created the Advisory Council on Diversity and Equity (ACDE) which reports directly to him. The 25 member Council includes faculty and staff and includes representatives from other pre-existing campus commissions dealing with minority and women’s concerns. The objective of the Council is to facilitate university-wide communication regarding issues of diversity and equity. Its goal is to bring all parties together as one voice to have greater impact on decision making.

Recent initiatives of the ACDE include submission of two proposals to the University Strategic Planning Council. One recommends cluster hiring of faculty to assist with teaching diversity in several departments/programs. The second is a proposal to provide systematic training on diversity and equity for NAU personnel.

The First Year Coordinating Council (FYCC) provides an example of the convergence of the leadership focus, the growing capacity for assessment, and the ongoing student-oriented culture. The charge of the Council is to focus the institution on key questions about student success, to inventory divergent and isolated efforts across campus, and facilitate a more efficient and collaborative system of programs and services. Faculty and staff from both academic and student affairs work collaboratively on the FYCC, facilitating changes in both areas. Academic programs have examined the details of course structure, timing of assessments for early feedback and coordinated student contacts through an early alert program. Residence Life has continued to develop programs to assist students within the residence halls through programming, assignment of rooms to groups/clubs, tutoring, intrusive advising/discussions with students, and providing students with ways to enhance student/faculty communication.

A consistent message across the campus, from individual student conversations to faculty, staff and administrators was the pervasive sense that the primary responsibility of faculty, and of the university as a whole, is to facilitate student success. There is a clear orientation toward students and learning as the primary mission. While not articulated with a particular emphasis on Latino/Hispanic students, those students relate
specific experiences that reflect the attention paid to them by faculty and staff and indicate that those relationships are key to their continuation at NAU.

Faculty hired before the 1980s were brought in with the clear expectation that NAU was a teaching institution focused on undergraduate students. The message has been that a robust research record is not sufficient for tenure. Strong teaching must be part of a NAU’s faculty member’s portfolio.

Over the years, there has been an increasing emphasis on faculty research, but that emphasis has never overshadowed the strong teaching ethic. More recently, with the growing emphasis on graduation and retention, the research push has moderated and refocused, at least in part. University funded faculty projects have included research related to minority issues and student success. While this funding is not focused on minority faculty, per se, it has served to broaden the support for faculty focused on minority issues and lends additional impetus to diversity efforts on campus.

The team did note a seeming paradox during their visit to campus. Many of the programs and activities discussed in this report have been implemented in response to data analysis and campus strategic planning is touted as data driven. However, the visiting team’s request for assessment information was often met with a response from department heads that the data collection process is in place but that the evaluation/analysis/assessment of that data is not yet complete. This seems to indicate that the culture of assessment on campus is still in its early stages. While decisions to invest in campus data systems set the stage for assessment-based institutional decision-making, that process is not yet robust.

Summary and Evaluation of What Was Learned
While diversity is an important element in strategic planning and in end of year reports which are tied to accountability and budgetary increases, there is little focus on Latino/Hispanic students per se. A few events on campus, including the Cesar Chavez Day and the Hispanic Convocation, focus specifically on Latino/Hispanic issues and interests. However, the vast majority of outreach and retention efforts are more general in nature – some focused on minority, first generation and financial need, others focused on recruitment for all students, regardless of circumstance. There is some sense that the attention to parents and families that is a part of the orientation process resonates well with the Latino/Hispanic families. The recent inclusion of local high school seniors in the Hispanic Convocation festivities has also allowed a bit more focused recruitment.

In summary, most members of the NAU community seemed pleased, and a bit surprised, that they were singled out for their success in serving Latino/Hispanic students in particular. Their assumption is that the services that are designed and delivered more generally are also effective in serving Latino/Hispanic students. It appears that this approach has served the institution well although it is not clear how much more successful the institution can become with Latino/Hispanic retention rates without additional, more targeted programs.

Components of Success. The study team feels that there are three important components in understanding the success that Northern Arizona University has had with Latino/Hispanic student retention and graduation: campus culture, the particular mix of students who attend the institution, and campus leadership. Each is discussed below.

16
Campus Culture: The culture of the institution allows Latinos/Hispanics to find and/or create a niche on campus where they feel socially integrated. The facilitation of a sense of belonging for Latino/Hispanic students begins with their participation in the summer bridge Successful Transition and Academic Readiness (STAR) program for those who are selected to participate. It appears that participation by Latino/Hispanic students in this program makes a significant difference in their retention and graduation from NAU. For those who are not able to participate, the outreach through Priority Enrollment begins to build connections to the institution even before students’ arrival on campus.

The sense of belonging for the Latino/Hispanic students continues to be created through building the myriad connections that students are encouraged to utilize on campus: learning communities in the residence halls, peer mentoring programs, student organizations, small classes, and personalized attention provided by faculty, to name a few. Specific initiatives that are targeted to improve retention and graduation of all students at NAU also impact the retention and graduation of Latino/Hispanic students. The initiatives include the Gateway Student Success Center, the STAR Bridge Program, the Multicultural Student Center, and Supplemental Instruction.

The idea that different students may connect with the institution in different ways underlies the NAU’s attempts to ensure that there are multiple avenues through which students can engage with the university community. The features identified by the institution in support of Latino/Hispanic student success, and described above, are a reflection of this culture.

NAU Admissions Criteria and the NAU Latino/Hispanic Student Body: The moderately high set of admissions standards ensures that Latino/Hispanic students who choose to attend NAU are likely to be academically prepared as well as highly motivated to achieve academically. While students interviewed by the team stated that they have strong family support for going to college, they appeared to be independent and self directed learners.

Leadership from the Top: Leadership from the President that restructured the organization and reallocated resources to retention and graduation initiatives has resulted in a sustained and focused attention to these issues. Members of the NAU faculty and staff that the team spoke with are clear that student success is an institutional value and priority. Leadership from the top has also ensured that there is an excellent working relationship among and between units in support of student success. The working relationship between Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management and Student Affairs is especially noteworthy and very impressive. Many of the University’s most successful programs are a direct outgrowth of the cooperative spirit between these two divisions.

Key Strategies used by the study campus to overcome retention and graduation challenges include: initiatives such as the STAR program, Supplemental Instruction, Priority Enrollment, Multicultural Student Center activities and the Gateway Student Success Center; efforts to educate the campus regarding the importance of diversity and cultural sensitivity through campus-wide attention to diversity and equity issues including diversity training; and proposing additional funding for retention/graduation improvements to the state Legislature.
Reasons for Evaluation

The team found consistency in the information and comments provided by the administration, faculty, staff and students during interviews. Documents read and the observations made by the team during the visit were consistent with the information provided and the comments made.

Key Challenges for the Study Campus

The team believes that NAU faces several key challenges in continuing to ensure and improve the success of Latino/Hispanic students.

Finding financial resources to expand the pool of available monies and ensuring sufficient financial aid for Latino/Hispanics students is a major challenge. Financial resources are critical for these students to persist. As the socioeconomic characteristics of the Latino/Hispanic student body continue to diversify, this need will become ever more pressing.

There is a sense on campus that the particular Latino/Hispanic students who find a comfortable niche at NAU may be those who are more academically and emotionally prepared for university life. Persistence of these students and their own abilities to take advantage of more generally designed services may be a key to their success. Therefore, the relative success of this subset of students may not necessarily translate to success among the broader spectrum of Latino/Hispanic students that need services and support in institutions of higher education. The Campus Study Team did not find any intentional, targeted programs aimed specifically at recruiting, retaining or graduating Latino/Hispanic students. Recruitment, retention and graduation success of these students is embedded within the effectiveness of programs that reach the general population or programs targeted to all minority students. If the profile of Latino/Hispanic students changes, campus programs and outreach will need to adapt as well. To serve this population, the study team believes that NAU would need to create programs specifically addressing the needs of Latino/Hispanic students. Such programs would also need to include greater and more intentional outreach to the broader Latino/Hispanic community.

Another challenge involves the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, staff and administration. This challenge includes offering attractive salaries to recruit faculty in the face of the high cost of living in Flagstaff. The challenge is further exacerbated by a perceived resistance by majority faculty to recruit and compensate adequately faculty of color. Particularly notable is the lack of ethnic diversity in the upper administration.

Finally, there may be issues of fairness in allocation of Student Government Association (SGA) funding to Latino/Hispanic student organizations. Latino/Hispanic students do not feel that funding through the SGA is equitably distributed. Whether this is perception or reality, it is a barrier to full inclusion for this student population.
Appendix: Constituencies Consulted and Resources Reviewed

Persons and Groups Interviewed
Sarah Aleman, Former head of faculty development
Cynthia Anderson, Associate Director of Residence Life
Susan Belatti, Coordinator of Learning Communities, Residence Life
Sarah Bickel, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs
David Bousquet, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs
Dorothy Briggs, Assistant Director of Educational Support Programs
David Camacho, Special Assistant to the President for Equity and Diversity
Alex Campos, Student
Margarita Carbajal, Student
Don Carter, Director, eLearning Center
Marc Chopin, Associate Dean, College of Business Administration
Todd Firth, Assistant Director, Gateway Student Success Center
Erin Grisham, Director, Educational Support
John Denis Haeger, President
Tammy Harrison, Assistant Director, Gateway Student Success Center
Pat Haeuser, Vice President for Planning, Budget and Institutional Research
Lee Hernandez, Student
Veronica Hipolito, Coordinator of Greek Life (residence halls); former NAU student
Kathy Kimball, Office Specialist, Student Services, College of Business Administration
Hilda Ladner, Director of Multicultural Student Center
Susan Longerbeam, Assistant Professor in Educational Psychology
Eileen Mahoney, Director, Gateway Student Success Center
Kooros Mahmoudi, Interim Dean of College of Social and Behavioral Sciences; TFFY
Taskforce member
Ana Mendiola, Student
Priscilla I. Mills, Director, Office of Affirmative Action & Equal Opportunity
Kisha Nishikawa, Director, NIH Initiative for Maximizing Student Diversity
Joselyne Perez, Student
Karen Pugliesi, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies
Linda Shadio, Head of Faculty Development
Cathy Small, Associate Professor in Anthropology; member First Year Experience Council
Jules Troyer, Graduate Student and Instructor
Octaviana V. Trujillo, Department of Applied Indigenous Studies
Wendy Wallace, Coordinator of Staff and Community Development
Paloma Ybanez, Student

Documents Reviewed
- Organizational Charts
- Services Impacting Retention
  - Gateway Student Success Center
  - Supplemental Instruction website
  - Supplemental Instruction report (see Page 3)
  - Advising
Northern Arizona University
30 March 2007

- Learning Assistance Centers website
- Learning Assistance Centers report (see Pages 1 & 3)
- Multicultural Student Center
- Student Support Services website
- Student Support Services report (see Page 2)

- Organizational Changes Since 1996
  - Gateway Student Success Center
  - Assessment Office

- Retention and Graduation Process (points of intervention)
  - Freshman Academic Programs - EPS 101 and FYE 101
  - Freshman Year Experience
  - STAR Program Retention Report
  - STAR Program Website
  - Freshman Year Experience/Initial Report
  - First Year Seminar
  - Final Report from the Freshman Year Task Force
  - Undergraduate Studies
    - Strategic Plan
    - Undergraduate Studies Retention Plan

- Strategic Planning Documents
  - Northern Arizona University Mission Statement
  - Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

- Latino/Hispanic Success
  - Report on Diversity and Equity

- Retention and Graduation Rates

- Features Serving All Students and Those Mainly Used by L/H Students
  - Learning Assistance Center
  - Supplemental Instruction
  - Hispanic Honor Society
  - Gamma Alpha Omega
  - Kappa Delta Chi
  - Omega Delta Phi
  - National Society for Minorities in Hospitality
  - Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
  - Hispanic Heritage Month

- Printed and Electronic Information Available in Spanish
  - Fact Sheet (Spanish)
  - Fact Sheet (English)
External Funding to Improve Minimum Participation
  - Minority Student Development Program
  - Multicultural Engineering Program

Undergraduate Student Profile

Routinely Used for Decision Making and Policy
  - Retention and Graduation Analysis

Improving Understanding of Diversity in Teaching and Learning
  - Faculty Development Program
  - Liberal Studies Requirement: Diversity

Who is Responsible for Achieving Graduation Rate Outcomes?
  - Provost and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies
  - Enrollment Management & Student Affairs