How the Collective Impact Model Can Help Hispanic Students in East Tennessee Excel in Higher Education

Edwin Soto
East Tennessee State University

12-2017

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How the Collective Impact Model Can Help Hispanic Students in East Tennessee Excel in Higher Education

A thesis presented to the faculty of the College of Business and Technology East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Science in Technology with a concentration in Entrepreneurial Leadership

by Edwin Soto December 2017

Dr. Mohammad Moin Uddin, Chair
Dr. Keith Johnson
Dr. Ken Silver

Keywords: Hispanic Students, Higher Education, Collective Impact, Challenges
ABSTRACT

How the Collective Impact Model Can Help Hispanic Students in East Tennessee Excel in Higher Education

by

Edwin Soto

This research project focuses on helping Hispanic students in the East Tennessee region excel in higher education with existing resources from various organizations. Hispanic high school students were identified to complete a survey. Findings showed that these students are facing legal, financial and social challenges when thinking about higher education. Even though these students are facing these challenges, they still want to pursue higher education in order to make a positive impact in their communities. The collective impact idea is proposed as part of the solution for this social complex problem. Since it is impossible for an individual to solve this alone, the goal is for these organizations to work together to help this population and their families. The conclusion of this project reminds us that data shows that the Hispanic population is growing in this region of Tennessee and that helping and educating this population is extremely important.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis committee for their continuous support during this project. It means a lot to me that they care about the growing Hispanic population and that they want to see a positive change in this group’s lives. I would also like to thank all the organizations involved in this project, especially my “home” for a year and a half, the Language and Culture Resource Center. From its founder, both directors, and every single one of the student-workers, I will be forever grateful.

I am genuinely thankful for my parents, my siblings and my alma gemela, Natalie. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your immense support, understanding the long nights, and for proofreading and editing my project 100 times. Lastly, I would like to thank the Hispanic students involved in this project, who have shown me what it means to dream and to never give up.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

By 2044, the United States will be majority-minority (Colby & Ortman, 2015). In other words, more than half of the population will be part of a minority race or ethnic group.

According to the United States Census Bureau on a report published on March 2015 (see Figure 1), the Hispanic population has become the largest racial minority group in the U.S. reaching 55.4 million individuals which represent 17.4% of the nation's entire population. This number is expected to grow to 119 million individuals (114.8% change) nationwide between 2014 and 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015).

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| Race Alone or in Combination2                       | |
|------------------------------------------------------|
| White                                                | 254,009 | 79.7 | 309,557 | 74.3 | 55,558 | 21.9 |
| Black or African American                            | 45,662 | 14.3 | 74,530 | 17.9 | 28,968 | 63.6 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native                   | 6,528 | 2.0 | 10,169 | 2.4 | 3,640 | 55.8 |
| Asian                                                | 19,083 | 6.3 | 48,575 | 11.7 | 28,492 | 143.1 |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander          | 1,458 | 0.5 | 2,929 | 0.7 | 1,470 | 100.8 |

| Hispanic or Latino Origin                           | |
|------------------------------------------------------|
| Hispanic                                             | 55,410 | 17.4 | 119,044 | 28.6 | 63,635 | 114.8 |
| Not Hispanic                                         | 263,338 | 82.6 | 297,750 | 71.4 | 34,412 | 13.1 |

1 Hispanic origin is considered an ethnicity, not a race. Hispanics may be of any race. Responses of "Some Other Race" from the 2010 Census are modified. For more information, see <www.census.gov/popest/data/historical/files/MRSF-01-US1.pdf>.

2 "In combination" means in combination with one or more other races. The sum of the live race groups adds to more than the total population, and 100 percent, because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 National Projections.

Figure 1. Population by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2014 and 2060

More importantly, according to Figure 2, 34% of all children [under 18] are projected to be Hispanic in 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to educate this specific population so that they can positively impact their communities.
Data from the U.S. Census Bureau (see Figure 3) shows that in the state of Tennessee there are a total of 328,979 Hispanics or Latinos which represents 5% of the state's population and 6% of the state’s labor force. Even though in Tennessee the Hispanic community is not as predominant as other races, the Hispanic population is growing rapidly. After looking at these numbers, many may think this data is surprising. However, the numbers already described in this project do not reflect the undocumented immigrants that arrive in the U.S. on a daily basis.
Even though the Hispanic population is fast-growing, they tend to drop out of high school more than whites and it is less likely for them to attend a 4-year college compared to other groups. Lately, the Hispanic dropout rate has been falling (see Figure 4), but there is still so much work to do to decrease that number as much as possible (Somoza, 2015).

Figure 3. Hispanics in Tennessee

Even though the Hispanic population is fast-growing, they tend to drop out of high school more than whites and it is less likely for them to attend a 4-year college compared to other groups. Lately, the Hispanic dropout rate has been falling (see Figure 4), but there is still so much work to do to decrease that number as much as possible (Somoza, 2015).

Figure 4. Hispanic Dropout Rate, 1967-2013
Education is crucial to an individual’s success. With an education, people are more prepared for the world they have to live in. Without an understanding of basic ideas about money and jobs and how to utilize them, young adults can enter the adult world and quickly start to struggle. Somoza claimed that “According to [Bureau of Labor Statistics] projections, 19 of the 40 fastest-growing occupations over the next several years will typically require some form of postsecondary education (2015, para. 22). Hispanic students can make such a positive impact in today’s society if they attend higher education. To ultimately help this unique student population reach the higher education level, it is essential to understand the barriers and struggles that these students commonly encounter (Person, Gutierrez Keeton, Medina, Gonzalez, & Minero, 2017). Unfortunately, Hispanic students face certain barriers or challenges when trying to further their education. Legal, financial and social challenges are the most important ones identified in this research project.

Some of these Hispanic students are undocumented students that have a tougher path to achieve higher education compared to those legally in the United States. Based on a report from bestcolleges.com, undocumented students are individuals that came to the United States from a foreign country without being inspected or with documents that did not pertain to them. These undocumented individuals knowingly proceeded to let their visas expire (College Guide For Undocumented Students, 2017). Clearly, by staying in the U.S., they are conducting an illegal act. However, we need to keep in mind that most of these students only came to the U.S. when they were very young under the control of their parents or family members who brought them. The adults in control were merely looking to have a better life for themselves and the children they brought with them. As they have grown up in the U.S., these young adults have learned the English language, are going/have gone through the educational system of the U.S., and have
lived in the American culture most of their lives. Some of them can’t even remember the country they were born in. They consider themselves Americans because the U.S. is all they know. These undocumented students are just victims of circumstances beyond their control. Having accessible legal help will ease the path to higher education for these students and their families significantly.

Another problem identified was the financial challenge. The Hispanic population has been growing significantly over the last decade. Correspondingly, the Hispanic population poverty rates are also increasing. In their report, Alvarez de Davila and Michaels (2016) explain that economic constraints limit Latino children’s academic success. They emphasize how much difficulty is involved when Hispanic families with immigrant parents try to do the same things as those families with U.S. born parents (Alvarez de Davila & Michaels, 2016). According to research by the Pew Hispanic Center, the vast majority (4.1 million) of the 6.1 million Latino children living in poverty have parents that immigrated to the United States compared to the 2 million Latino children that have parents that were born in the United States (Lopez & Velasco, 2011). For Hispanic students, especially undocumented ones, affording tuition rates is very difficult if not impossible. There are realistic ways for every Hispanic student to excel in higher education, and a collective impact model will remarkably help achieve their goal.

One last challenge these Hispanic students are facing is the social one. As we know, parents can turn out to be very influential in a child’s life. Educating Hispanic parents about the importance and the value of their children going to and excelling in higher education is vital. Unfortunately, many English Language Learners’ (including Hispanics) parents have not graduated from high school or any kind of higher education; therefore, any level of education are not expected to be of value (Prosise, 2008). Over the years, students that are supported by their
peers, especially family, friends, and teachers, and can rely on them for any advice or counsel when facing a challenging situation, are known to be more academically successful. (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009). Having support from parents and family members is vital to a student’s success in higher education. The more Hispanic students that know these options themselves, the better. They can then communicate with each other and pass the information down to students younger than them. Adults can give students the advice, but if the help is coming from their friends as well, more students will be influenced to pursue higher education possibilities.

Hispanic students from the area should have access to advice and counseling about their realistic options by combining efforts from different organizations in the East Tennessee region. Some will need an entire community of support to gain the courage to go above and beyond what they have always thought was possible. If schools set a goal to have all personnel trained and informed of these options for students, then no matter who the students confide in, they will have information for them.

As seen above, legal, financial and social challenges are some of the real problems Hispanic students are facing today. Because of these difficulties, many students give up on their dreams to pursue higher education. Obviously, an individual cannot solve all of the problems these Hispanic students are facing. That is the main reason why a collective impact initiative to help Hispanic students excel in higher education in East Tennessee is necessary. Collective impact arises when different organizations agree to solve a specific social complex problem working towards the same goal and uniting their efforts (Kania & Kramer, 2011). There are many organizations in East Tennessee offering various resources, and if they all come together...
and work towards the same goal, they can make positive impacts in so many Hispanic students’ lives.

**Objectives**

The objectives of this thesis project are as follow:

- **Conduct Survey to identify challenges and need of a collective impact model**
- **Create collective impact model**
- **Model validation**

The main reason for the development of this collective impact model is there is real, raw potential in Hispanics that live in today’s society. Together with a committee, there was a realization that if there was a chance to make a positive impact in the Hispanic population of East Tennessee, the first thing that needed to be conducted was a survey in order to identify the specific challenges these young Hispanic students are facing. The study was addressed to Hispanic individuals that are currently at the high school level in East Tennessee. Also, it was given to various Hispanic individuals that have already graduated from some higher education institutions in the area. The goal was to evaluate the challenges they are facing or have faced and to determine how a model like this would help them go on to excel in higher education.

The next objective will be actually to create the collective impact model. In East Tennessee, we have many organizations already in place that love helping Hispanic students and their families as much as they can. The problem is that sometimes these agencies don’t have all the necessary resources to satisfy a particular individual’s need or there is too much demand. The idea is to combine all the different resources from different organizations from the area so that students and their families can benefit from their services. Several entities were reached, and they are all very excited about this project and cannot wait to see the results.
Lastly, getting the model validated is vital. This idea will be successful thanks to the feedback from Hispanic individuals that have already graduated from some higher education institutions, and thanks to the different organizations helping with this model. These agencies are aware of past collective impact examples, and they all believe a model like this would only help the young generation of Hispanics and their families in the East Tennessee area.

**Limitations of the Research**

As much as I would like to impact the lives of all the Hispanic students in the world, I cannot (at least for now). This is a project to which I have dedicated countless hours and resources of my own. I believe that focusing in East Tennessee, especially the Tri-Cities area, is a realistic target area. This idea can be implemented in different states but the challenges faced might not be the same. Doing the necessary research is going to be crucial to adapt this initiative to another area. This is a project that I started working on in the Fall of 2016. In just a year, I have gathered as much information as I could while also working on all my classes and working as a graduate assistant at the Language and Culture Resource Center (LCRC) at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). My goal is to make an online version of the model so that students and organizations can access it. These students will be able to look for any updates and also more resources. This can be done at the LCRC website (http://www.etsu.edu/cas/lcrc/).
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

For any individual, communities and even the country as a whole, education is one of the most effective ways to improve the quality of our future. Regarding those individuals and communities whose goal is to prosper, the high school diploma is no longer satisfactory due to the evolving global innovations. (Policy Alert, 2005). According to an article by Gonzalez Sullivan (2007), higher education will be the key to successful participation in the new workforce (Gonzalez Sullivan, 2007). With today’s world evolving so fast, the need for some kind of higher education becomes more critical every second. The fact that the Hispanic population is growing so fast should motivate them to pursue higher education. Unfortunately, a lot of Hispanics face different challenges that make their path to higher education a little tougher. The author identifies legal, financial, and social challenges as the most important obstacles Hispanic students are facing.

Challenges

Being a Hispanic student in the U.S. educational system is very challenging, but being an undocumented Hispanic student in the U.S. educational system is even more challenging. Undocumented immigrant status constitutes a significant factor in contributing to the educational underachievement among Hispanic students in the U.S (Pessoa, 2010). Only 5 to 10 percent of the 65,000 undocumented students that graduate from an U.S. high school every year attend college (Gonzales, 2009). These are very low numbers, but they are numbers that can improve with proper advising and realistic recommendations to these students.
Many Hispanic students are individuals who have studied their entire lives in the U.S. educational system. It is not until they are thinking about higher education that some of them realize they are undocumented students since they came to the country at a very young age and were not born in the United States. Many undocumented high school students become aware of their status during the process of applying to college and while applying for a job (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007). Since they don’t have a social security number, they are not allowed to apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or get in-state tuition (even though they may have lived most of their lives in a particular state). This legal issue all of the sudden becomes a significant bump in the road to higher education for many Hispanics. Rafael Toribio (pseudonym), a Mexican descendant who graduated from a local university in 2012, admitted that he did not know about how his legal situation was going to affect him when applying for college until his junior year of high school. He explained that it was a major challenge for him and his fellow Hispanic classmates. He mentioned that the legal problem was existent for even his Hispanic friends that were U.S. citizens since their parents recommended them not to apply for any financial help because they were undocumented and did not want to expose themselves.

Finding financial help for these Hispanic young students is also vital to their success in higher education. One of the common risk factors for children of the unauthorized [or unauthorized children themselves] is their families’ low income, which has been associated with low school achievement, among other negative outcomes (Capps, Fix, & Zong, 2016). Depending on their legal status, sometimes Hispanic students have to pay out of state tuition, which sometimes is up to three times more expensive compared to in-state tuition. Families struggle to find the financial help necessary to send their children to college. Lorena Cordoba (pseudonym), a Colombian student that recently became a U.S. Citizen, mentioned that thanks to
her older siblings’ advice she could apply for many scholarships when she decided to attend a local community college. Since she was a Tennessee resident, she was awarded many scholarships including Hope, Aspire, Pell Grant, etc.

Unfortunately, not every Hispanic is a legal resident. Sometimes it takes Hispanics until they are in high school to even realize they are not legal residents and the idea of pursuing higher education becomes financially impossible. At this point, they believe it is impossible for them to go to college. At first, Rafael Toribio had to work many jobs to afford to pay out of state tuition at a local community college. Thanks to his excellent grades and networking abilities, he was fortunate enough to receive a full scholarship at a local university and earn his bachelor’s degree from there. He mentioned multiple times that he wished he had some kind of help or support on his path to college.

Social challenges is another bump in the road for the Hispanic population. Having parents’ support throughout the process is vital for a young student’s success. Manuel Cruz (pseudonym) remembers that growing up his parents expected good grades and going to college was not an option; it was a requirement. Both of his parents were fortunate enough to receive a college degree, so from a very young age, he knew that he had to go to college. Manuel mentioned that they used to sit down at the dinner table on a daily basis and his parents would ask questions about his future. Questions like: Which college are you planning on attending? What are you going to study? What are you going to be when you grow up?

Unfortunately, this is not the case in every Hispanic family. There are many young Hispanic students whose parents did not go to college and have no idea about how or when to apply, whom to contact, which college is best for their kids, etc.. Most of these young Hispanics believe that college is not an option when they graduate high school. In fact, they believe that
working on a farm or working in the kitchen of a restaurant is what the future holds for them. In an interview with Eduardo Beato (pseudonym), a Mexican senior at a local university, he stated that since he was a first-generation student, he did not get any social support from his parents or older siblings. He mentioned that if it were up to his parents, he would be helping them work instead of being a semester away from obtaining his bachelor’s degree in Engineering. He remembers that it was challenging for him since he did not have that parent figure telling him what to do, how to apply, or what to look for when thinking about higher education.

On the other hand, Lorena Cordoba describes her relationship with her two older siblings as magical. They both had master’s degrees and helped her tremendously while looking at and applying for colleges. Lorena is very thankful that even though her parents did not attend any kind of higher education, they always supported her with her studies. These two very different family situations are examples of each side on the spectrum. There are those Hispanic students that may have supportive family members that are educated in the process, but the majority of these young Hispanic students are not lucky enough to say that. Eduardo, Rafael and many others are having to gather the information on their own, and it is a task that is unfinished by many Hispanic students who never reach the higher education level. Those who are even less fortunate do not even realize that it is an option for them. They are only planning on finding a job after high school that will give them enough money to get by.

The economic impact on the Latino population will eventually be detrimental to the social standing of the United States, impacting not only local communities but the entire country (Urbina & Rodriguez Wright, 2015). We can stop this from happening by educating our growing young Hispanic population. However, this is a unique social complex problem. It is almost impossible for an individual or a single organization to solve a social complex problem by
themselves. Collective impact arises when different organizations agree to address a specific social complex problem working towards the same goal and uniting their efforts. This idea is getting very popular in different parts of the world. Actually, different kind of organizations, including the White House, have reached out to express their desire to adopt the collective impact idea to for some of their initiatives (Hanleybrown, Kania, & Kramer, 2012).

**The 5 Conditions of Collective Impact**

According to the original article on this topic (see Figure 5), the five conditions of collective success are as follows (Kania & Kramer, 2011):

Common Agenda

Collective impact requires all involved to have similar goals and to invest all their efforts to understand the issue at hand and brainstorm ways to collectively solving them. In East Tennessee, many different organizations focus on increasing higher education numbers for Hispanic students, especially undocumented students. They have all agreed to be featured in this thesis project and are eager to help these Hispanic students. They know that these students and young people discussed in this paper can contribute to society and the workforce just as much as U.S. born individuals one day if they are given the equal opportunity of education.

Shared Measurements

Developing a shared measurement system is essential for the success of collective impact. In this case, shared measurement means that the different organizations contributing to the collective impact idea hold each other to a certain standard by tracking each other's contributions. They are merely making sure each agency is pursuing the common goal and that they are carrying out their specific role in the process. This allows for continuous improvement since it adds accountability to those helping the students with their particular questions and concerns. Documenting everything they do related to this project can be a significant advantage. Different organizations can become more efficient and effective by learning from each other.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Collective impact works best when different groups work together by helping with the specific set of actions in which it does bests in a way that supports the efforts of others instead of having all the organizations doing the same thing. In other words, doing what each does best while identifying new ways to work together.
Continuous Communication

Developing trust between different organizations can be a significant challenge. Each has started with its specific agenda, but now it needs to fuse with the others for one common goal. The beginning stressor can be the communication. Even though this might be challenging at the beginning, it is vital to the project’s success. Decisions will be made with the objective of finding the best possible solution to the problem instead of focusing on each organization’s priorities. Thanks to today’s technology, communicating via a group email would be the most efficient way to keep each other updated with different resources and concerns. All of the various parties could even create a large group communication option. This would make sure that everyone gets all of the information, even if it does not directly pertain to them at the time. With a large project like this one, knowing all the little pieces will most definitely help the common goal get reached easier.

Backbone Support Organizations

In order to maintain a healthy infrastructure, a collective impact needs a backbone organization that will lead the way. In a collective impact model, the backbone organization provides cyclic and precise evaluations of improvement attained by the different working organizations (Preskill, Parkhurst, & Splansky Juster, 2014). This agency will be responsible for keeping the initiative rolling. The backbone organization for this project will be the LCRC at ETSU. The LCRC will have the ability to grab other organizations’ attention and create a sense of urgency when needed. They have years of experience along with connections to students and high schools in the area as well. Their expertise in finding students in need will need to be followed up with the resources available to help them. That is where the partners will come in. Finding the prospective students is only just the start. You must show them what plans are in
place for them and what possibilities they have other than the ones they have already been ingrained in their heads. Once they are notified of their options in the educational field, they can finally decide where they would like to carry out their opportunities. This is how the effort will come around full-circle and how these young Hispanic students can benefit the most out of such a collective impact model.

Past Collective Impact Initiatives

Collective impact is such a powerful idea to collaborate between organizations that is achieving many significant effects on major social issues. Below are some past examples:

- **Strive**

  A nonprofit organization in Cincinnati, Strive has brought together many leaders and organizations with the purpose of attacking the student attainment adversity and improving education in the greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky area. What motivated them is the fact that the United States now ranks 18th among the top 24 industrialized nations after being the global leader for the maximum high school graduation rate. This statistic reflects more than 1 million high school students dropping out every year. In a report published by Kania & Kramer, they state how despite budget cuts and recession, success indicators show positive trends from Strive including graduation rates, fourth-grade reading and math scores, etc. (2011). The reason Strive succeeded when many other initiatives failed in such a rough time was because many community leaders and organizations (including government and nonprofits) decided to abandon their agendas and jump in the collective impact approach to tackle this social complex problem. They realized how fixing one part of the educational system would not make a big difference unless all components of the system improved together.
Instead of trying to develop new ways to improve the educational system or attempting to get donors to give money away, Strive put all their efforts in bringing the entire scholarly community on a specific and pointed set of goals, ranked in the same way. Their goal was to learn from each other and align their efforts by creating their Student Success Network. They scheduled meetings between mentors and students to develop performance indicators and to discuss students progress (Strive Partnership, 2017).

- **Home Again**

In 2007, a collective impact approach was used with the goal of reducing the number of adults who have been homeless for a period of a year or more in Worcester, Massachusetts. For 21 months, Home Again was compared to “Standard Care” (the services available at the time through homeless service providers in the Worcester area). Some of the factors compared included remaining housed for a 6-month period, decreased alcohol use, decreased use of hospital emergency health services, improved mental health, and increased social support for participants. The evaluation also assessed whether participants felt satisfied with the Home Again initiative.

After the trial period, results showed that 1 out of 4 participants were as likely as those individuals receiving Standard Care to succeed at maintaining their home for a period of six months or more. Also, the use of hospital emergency visits decreased for Home Again clients while it increased for Standard Care clients, the mental health visits improved for both groups, but the Home Again clients had a more significant improvement. Lastly, participants from this project showed excitement with the treatment received by Home Again. (Rothman & Baughman, 2009).
• Shape up Somerville

In an effort to decrease and avoid childhood obesity in school children in Somerville, Mass., different organizations from various areas came together to solve a common problem. The Shape Up Somerville program engaged with different schools, businesses, government officials and everyday citizens by defining wellness practices.

As a result of the education offered by this initiative, the educational system in the area agreed to serve food with healthier options, to implement nutrition classes and to encourage students to exercise. A diploma was given to those food establishments that had healthier choices as part of their menu. Somerville implemented a local farmer's market and encouraged local gyms to offer discounts to area residents. Because of all the changes effectuated in the city of Somerville, results showed that children lost one pound during one school year (Splansky Juster, 2013).
CHAPTER 3
DATA COLLECTION

A local high school in the East Tennessee area with a sizable Hispanic population was first identified and approached with this study. This high school had a previous relationship with the LCRC and its XCELL mentor program. Once permission was obtained from the thesis committee, the Institutional Review Board at ETSU and the high school’s principal, 30 Hispanic students were identified to participate in the project. After these students were identified, they were approached with information about this study and the opportunity to be part of it. When interest was established, each participant was then required to read and agree to an informed consent-assent before responding to the survey questions.

An electronic method was chosen to get responses from individuals. The reason behind this approach was mainly convenience. Less paper was used, and the reviewer could examine all the data in a timely fashion. Each survey was accessible without the need to carry around a substantial amount of paper. It ended up being very convenient because the identified students had personal tablets provided by their high school. It made the survey distribution process as smooth as possible.

The objective of the survey was to identify the challenges Hispanic students are facing when thinking about furthering their education. The study was designed based on the challenges identified by the researcher and his thesis committee. The survey consists of two parts. The first part targets current Hispanic students in high school and the second part targets Hispanic individuals that have already graduated from a higher education institution. They are asked to share the challenges they are facing or have already faced in high school as a Hispanic student.

The survey started with the question “Are you Hispanic or Latino?” to ensure all participants come from similar backgrounds. The high school students’ part of the survey
continued by asking questions about the students’ parents’ level of education followed by a question about factors limiting them from pursuing higher education. These questions were beneficial when evaluating if their parents’ level of education influenced their desire to pursue higher education. Lastly, the survey asked for their opinion on having a collective impact model implemented in this area as well as any extra-curricular activities or advocacy programs they are part of.

The second part of the survey started with a question about the highest level of education completed by the Hispanic individual followed by his or her parents’ level of education. The participant was then asked to list any challenges faced during high school when pursuing higher education. Lastly, the survey ended by asking their opinion on having a collective impact model implemented in this area and if a model like this would have helped them ease the way when they were juniors and seniors in high school. Participants had unlimited time to complete the survey and showed excitement to see the results of the project.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

The data acquired from the survey responses were analyzed using Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap). REDCap was chosen because it is recognized for its security and efficiency. REDCap has been used to build and manage online surveys and databases in academic research settings before. REDCap also allows users to track data manipulation and user activity, which is very important for the researcher and the participants in the project (Vahora & Arwardy, 2014). The survey respondents were very excited because they were part of a project that is going to help them and their fellow Hispanics in East Tennessee excel in higher education.

One of the objectives of this project was to identify if the legal, financial and social challenges are some of the issues these Hispanic students are facing. According to Figure 6, 73% of the respondents admitted that they are facing at least one of these challenges when trying to pursue higher education. Getting them help as soon as possible is extremely important in order to educate this young growing generation and prepare them to make a positive impact in their communities.

![Figure 6. At Least One of the Challenges Occurred (n=30)](image-url)
Referring to Figure 7, the fact that 80% of the parents of these Hispanic students did not attend some kind of higher education is distressing. It can be very challenging for parents to guide their children to higher education when they did not attend higher education and are unfamiliarized with when and how to apply, career advice, scholarship opportunities, etc.. This was the motivational information used to fuel the pursuit to find resources necessary to help this young Hispanic population succeed in their pursuit of higher education.

![Parents that Attended Some Kind of Higher Education (n=30)](image)

*Figure 7. Parents that Attended Some Kind of Higher Education*

Even though the vast majority of the parents of the survey respondents did not attend any kind of higher education, these young students understand the importance of this and want to attend higher education. Out of the 30 respondents, 80% of young Hispanics (see Figure 8) said that they are considering attending higher education. Another positive finding was that nobody
mentioned they did not want to attend higher education; in fact, the remaining 20% of respondents said that they do not know yet, but they would like to attend higher education.

*Figure 8. Desire to Attend Higher Education (n=30)*

Findings in Figure 9 showed that past participation in any advocacy programs had not been expressed by the majority (90%) of these students. In fact, 60% of the students admitted that they have not been part of any advocacy programs before, but that they would like to be part of one. Something as simple as becoming aware of different issues and relaying that knowledge to your peers can help spread the word about important topics concerning families from diverse backgrounds (Royea & Appl, 2009). Organizations involved in this collective impact initiative promote many advocacy opportunities in which these students and their families can get involved.
According to Figure 10, 87% of the Hispanic high school student respondents showed that they believe they would benefit from having a path that specifically helps Hispanic students in East Tennessee go and excel in higher education (specifically addressing the legal, financial and social challenges). This is extremely important since these young growing Hispanic population in East Tennessee will be able to provide these resources to their friends and family members as well.
Ultimately, interesting data was also found in the second part of this study that targeted Hispanic individuals that have already graduated from some kind of higher education. According to Figure 11, 100% of the respondents answered that they faced at least one of these challenges (legal, financial and/or social) when they were in high school. Similarly, they all believe that Hispanic individuals have a tougher path to higher education. Lastly, these respondents believe there is a need for a collective impact model in the East Tennessee area in order to help Hispanic students pursue higher education.
Figure 11. Responses from Already Graduated Individuals

Responses from Already Graduated Individuals (N=11)

100% 100% 100%

- At Least One of the Challenges Occurred During High School
- Believe there is a Need of a Collective Impact Model in East TN
- Believe Hispanics Have a Tougher Path to Higher Education
CHAPTER 5
EAST TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION PREPARATION GUIDE

Based on the responses shown in the previous chapter, we can take away that help is needed regarding Hispanics pursuing higher education in the East Tennessee region. The collective impact idea was used to develop an East Tennessee Higher Education Preparation Guide. In this guide, the LCRC at ETSU will serve as the backbone organization for all the different entities helping with this collective impact initiative. The backbone organization is vital for the success of these young Hispanic students since it will be in charge of making sure that communication in between entities is up to date. They must take the initiative to help these Hispanic students find the resources they need in a timely matter. Data collection from this project shows that legal, financial and social challenges are some of the obstacles these young students are facing when thinking about furthering their education. Thanks to the collective impact idea, the author found many resources to help with the social complex problem of Hispanic students going and excelling in higher education. Below are some figures explaining the model (see Figures 12 and 13).

![Model Proposal](image-url)

*Figure 12. Model Proposal*
Figure 13. East Tennessee Higher Education Preparation Guide

Figure 13 shows different organizations and which category they will fit into in the East TN Higher Education Preparation Guide. The organizations in the gray highlighted section will assist in the legal aspects of this project. The ones highlighted in orange are the ones related to the financial aspects. Lastly, the ones highlighted in blue will be the help found regarding the social challenges these Hispanic students face.

Communication is vital in every teamwork strategy. Being willing to respect and trust one another via communication are some of the keys to develop and sustain teams (Quick, 1992). Figure 14 demonstrates that the LCRC will be the backbone organization of this model and therefore linked to the different entities helping with the challenges Hispanic students face that were identified in Figure 13. For this project, communication will be critical; to help these young
Hispanic students, the LCRC’s goal will be to stay updated with any changes related to all the entities involved. These changes could happen on a daily basis. The LCRC website should be updated at the same frequency of these changes so that students can access any of the information they are provided as soon as it is needed. Below, the author has gathered the resources offered by all the organizations involved in this collective impact initiative as well as a brief description of all of them and what they do. Please note that the East Tennessee Higher Education Preparation Guide has hyperlinks to the exact website needed to get information on the resources regarding legal, financial and social challenges.

Figure 14. LCRC as the backbone organization
Language and Culture Resource Center at East Tennessee State University

The vision of the LCRC is to expand community partnerships and to bridge boundaries between the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking communities in East Tennessee. Their mission is to increase diversity awareness but also to bring together people from different backgrounds through research and outreach programs. Just like this collective impact initiative, their goal is to encourage Hispanic/Latino students to aspire to higher education and to graduate, through ongoing recruiting and mentoring services.

The LCRC is an excellent place for students to come and interact with their staff, relax or even work on homework. They are located in the Campus Center Building on the ETSU main campus. They offer help with interpreting services and the translation of documents. Tutoring is also available at the LCRC. The LCRC offers a $1,000 scholarship per semester to any student (incoming or already enrolled). They require a minimum Grade Point Average of 3.0 and for the student to be bilingual or studying translation and interpretation with a declared interest in a career in that field.

Two of the most interesting free services the LCRC offers are the Expanding College Access to English Language Learners Program (XCELL) and their Hispanic Student Day event. The XCELL Program is a year-long program in which their staff goes to local high schools with the purpose of promoting higher education to Hispanic students. They offer scholarship resources, help students applying to college, mentoring, and more. On the other hand, The Hispanic Student Day is a day-long event in which Hispanic students from various high schools in the East TN area go to ETSU’s campus and get to know more about what ETSU and more higher education institutions have to offer for this population. They can learn about the admission process, listen to testimonials from other Hispanic students, walk around campus and
even visit the department of their choice to get an idea of what their major should be. The students also get to enjoy a free meal where university recruiters are available for questions. They are both two very successful services that Hispanic students and their families can take advantage of.

Contact Info:
Language and Culture Resource Center
219 Campus Center Building | PO Box 70297
Johnson City, TN 37614 | 423-439-8342

Helpful links: http://www.etsu.edu/cas/lcrc/
http://www.etsu.edu/cas/lcrc/about/mission.php
http://www.etsu.edu/cas/lcrc/mentor/mentor.php
http://www.etsu.edu/cas/lcrc/events/hispanicday.php

Conexión Américas

Conexión Américas was founded in 2002 and is located in Nashville, TN, but they are willing to help students from anywhere in Tennessee. Their mission is to build a welcoming community and create opportunities where Latino families can belong, contribute and succeed. Just like this collective impact idea, they understand that initiatives to encourage the integration of Hispanic families are very important for their success.

For this reason, Conexión Américas is a strong supporter of advocacy programs, and one of their goals is to encourage Hispanic families to integrate socially, economically and civically in their communities. According to their website, they have helped families improve their English, buy homes, start businesses, succeed in school and helped them reach nationally recognized services and programs. Some of the programs and services they offer include Enlaces
(Links), Parents as Partners, Puertas Abiertas (Open Doors), Immigration updates, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and more.

Enlaces (Links) helps Hispanic families with a variety of services including translation of documents, finding legal assistance and getting in contact with a specialized doctor. They also believe that parents are one of the most influential figures in any children's lives. For this reason, they created their Parents as Partners program which focuses on providing them with useful information and resources on their children's education.

Conexión Américas does a fantastic job for the Hispanic population of Tennessee. Hispanic students and their families are encouraged to contact them at the information below for any help or assistance.

Contact info:
Casa Azafrán Community Center • 2195 Nolensville Pike | Nashville, TN 37211
(615) 320-5152 | en Español, (615) 269-6900 | info@conamericas.com

Helpful links:
http://www.conexionamericas.org/who-we-are/mission-and-approach/
http://www.conexionamericas.org/what-we-do/programs-and-services-for-latino-families/

TN Achieves

TN Achieves is located in Knoxville, TN and they are the partnering organization to the TN Promise Scholarship in 85 of the 95 counties in Tennessee (they serve every county in East Tennessee). Their mission is to increase higher education opportunities for Tennessee high school students by providing last-dollar scholarships with mentor guidance. Again, just like this collective impact initiative, their mission is to eliminate the barriers associated with entering post-secondary education. In a seven-year period starting in 2008, they helped more than 10,000
students from different backgrounds attend a community or a technical college by raising millions of dollars.

They are part of the Drive to 55 campaign whose goal is to promote education and achieve 55 percent higher education attainment by 2025. TN Achieves encourages parents, young professionals or even the busiest executive to be a mentor for a student. These mentors are vital for the student’s success as they make the transition from high school to higher education. Hispanic students can benefit significantly from this program since they can maintain communication all year long with a person that has already been in their shoes and will provide tips to ease their path to higher education.

Mentors love helping these students. In fact, Manuel Cruz (pseudonym), came to the United States to play college baseball at a local university and graduated with a summa cum laude degree in the spring of 2016. Manuel now works for a mortgage company and is a mentor for TN Achieves. He mentioned how he got involved through his firm and loves giving his students advice on applying to college and filling out different applications since these students are usually first-generation students that do not have their families’ support. Manuel makes sure his assigned students have a contact person in the higher education institution they will attend and reminds them about important dates and deadlines. Once they are in college, he checks on his students periodically to make sure they are enjoying their time and to offer advice on how to get involved. Manuel mentioned that he would have loved to be part of this program as a student if he had known of its existence while he was in high school.
Centro Hispano of East Tennessee

Similar to the other organizations featured in this model, Centro Hispano (Hispanic Center) of East Tennessee’s mission is to promote empowerment and civic participation of the multicultural community through education and social services. They aspire to be the reference organization for education and social services to improve the quality of life and the successful integration of multicultural families into the community. They became a non-profit organization in 2005 and have been positively influencing families in East Tennessee since then. They have a great team with people from different backgrounds eager to help our Hispanic population.

In a conversation with Claudia Caballero, the executive director, she mentioned that she would like to see more Hispanic community leaders. She also emphasized advocacy. She believes that Hispanics should be proud of where they come from and having leaders from these backgrounds will motivate fellow young Hispanics to do the same.

The Centro Hispano of East TN offers a variety of ESL courses depending on the individual’s needs. They also offer monthly workshops providing tools for Hispanic students (usually first generation) to navigate post-secondary educational options.
Contact info:
Centro Hispano de East Tennessee
2455 Sutherland Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37919
(865) 522-0052
info@centrohispanotn.org

Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC)

TIRRC is a coalition led by a group of immigrants and refugees all over the state of TN. Their mission is to empower immigrants and refugees in the state of Tennessee to develop a unified voice, defend their rights, and create an atmosphere in which they are recognized as positive contributors to the state. TIRRC believes in the power of advocacy. They offer programs like Civic Engagement, Policy and Advocacy, Immigration Integration and a Know Your Rights initiative. Besides their goal of promoting advocacy and educating the Tennessee community through their different programs, TIRRC also offer services to help the community face their specific challenges such as DACA application assistance, consulate and citizenship advice, help reporting a rights abuse, and registering individuals to vote.

Contact info:
TIRRC
2195 Nolensville Rd, Nashville, TN 37211
615.833.0384
http://www.tnimmigrant.org/
La Paz Chattanooga

In an effort to strengthen communities and develop Hispanic leaders in the Chattanooga region, La Paz's goal is to offer a place in which Hispanics in the area can come and feel at home. In a conversation with part of their staff, they made it clear that their first objective is to help the people of Chattanooga but that if anybody in Tennessee asks for help and they can make a positive impact they would do so. They aspire to be a place where Hispanics are welcomed into Chattanooga and see it as a community they would like to contribute and be a part of.

In their website, La Paz has a list of resources that include anything from career and jobs centers to food bank information and from legal services to different countries’ consulates. A resource center is also available in which they offer English as a Second Language classes, citizenship workshops, employment services among other services. A fascinating program La Paz provides is called Mi Futuro (My Future) which is an initiative to help strengthen the educational success of Latino youth. In this program, selected Latinos in grades 11 and 12 attend workshops and learn about college preparation. Just like in this project, they also believe that this is very important and that projects like this will lead to a rise in employment success in the future.

Contact info:
La Paz Chattanooga
1402 Bailey Ave, Chattanooga, TN 37404
423-624-8414
https://www.lapazchattanooga.org/index.php
Catholic Charities of East Tennessee (Ccetn)

CCETN is a member of Catholic Charities USA, which is the largest social service agency in the United States. Disregarding religious choice, their mission is to help any individual that is part of the lower class in East Tennessee. They offer 13 different programs and services across East Tennessee ranging from counseling and education advice to housing assistance. According to Alma Vazquez, one of their staff members, they offer tax preparation assistance, pregnancy services and immigration advice for a low cost for those who might not be able to afford an attorney specifically in the Johnson City area. In a conversation with Alma, she mentioned how important it is to help our growing Hispanic community in the East Tennessee area.

Contact info:

Catholic Charities
119 Dameron Ave, Knoxville, TN 37917
865-524-9896
1409 West Market St #109, Johnson City, TN 37604
423-328-0070

https://ccetn.org/
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<th>Financial Help</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCETN (Immigration Services)</td>
<td>LCRC (LCRC scholarship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIRRC (Immigrant Integration &amp; Citizenship Program)</td>
<td>Conexion Americas (Economic integration, help with taxes, homeownership and starting your business)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIRRC (DACA application assistance, know your rights, consulate, citizenship assistance)</td>
<td>TIRRC (Advocacy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conexion Americas (Immigration Updates)</td>
<td>Equal Chance for Education (Scholarship opportunities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Paz (Citizenship workshop)</td>
<td>LA Paz (Employment services &amp; workshop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant Legal Resource Center (Legal training, educational materials, policy and advocacy)</td>
<td>Conexion Americas (ESL classes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration Policy Institute (Analysis of the movement of people worldwide)</td>
<td>My Undocumented Life (Scholarship opportunities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Immigration Law Center (Impact litigation, policy and advocacy)</td>
<td>The Dream U.S. (Scholarships)</td>
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<tr>
<td>United We Dream (Legislative updated in the U.S.)</td>
<td>United We Dream (Scholarship for Undocumented Students)</td>
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<td>TIRRC (Advocacy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Paz (ESL classes, community leaders, Latino health fair)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCETN (ESL Classes, Pregnancy Services, post-secondary education workshops)</td>
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**Figure 15. East Tennessee Higher Education Preparation Guide**
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The facts mentioned in this study prove the importance of Hispanics in education. With the percentage of Hispanics in the population of the United States rising to 28.6% by the year 2060, the dropout rate and rate of Hispanics without a higher education cannot remain the same without severe consequences. The United States is a place of opportunity, and it should be offered to all equally. All that means for young Hispanic students in this area who wish to pursue higher education is that they do not remain ignorant of their options. They need to be informed about how they can make the changes in their life they wish to make.

Hispanic students may be thought of as students that do not want to pursue higher education. To people who are unfamiliar with how these students entered the country or how they are currently living, they may seem uninterested in gaining the information higher education offers. However, this is not the case. The study conducted in the chosen high school in East Tennessee proves that the interest is there, but some challenges stand in the way of these Hispanic students. They must conquer legal, financial, and social boundaries before they can even enter a higher education institution.

A collective impact model like the one suggested in this project would help shrink or even eliminate these challenges for the students. With a backbone organization like the LCRC, this model could gain several other contributors who all have roles and resources to contribute to the model. No one organization could carry out the goal alone. It would take all of them collectively to make the theory a reality.

We have gotten this far on this project without any monetary help whatsoever. As far as future recommendations, being able to get a grant to keep developing this idea would be very
beneficial. At this moment, the more realistic form of communication is using technology (phone and email). However, with monetary help, it is possible that a representative from all the organizations involved can meet face-to-face and discuss more in-depth the challenges faced by the Hispanic students in East Tennessee and keep finding ways to work collaboratively to solve these problems. Also, expanding this idea to the entire state of Tennessee and other states can be achieved in the future. This way, more Hispanic students and their families can become aware of the resources available for them in their respective areas. One last recommendation is to get major companies involved in this project. Currently, there are many companies in growing industries interested in helping minority students achieve higher education. Getting these companies engaged in mentoring, internship opportunities, and workshops will help these students gain a better understanding of what their life can look like once they achieve higher education.
REFERENCES


http://www.strivepartnership.org/


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Survey Questions:
Thesis topic:
How the Collective Impact Model Can Help Hispanic Students in East Tennessee Go and Excel in Higher Education

Questionnaire:
1. Are you Hispanic/Latino?
   • Yes
   • No

If you are currently in high school please go to question 2, if you have graduated from any kind of higher education institution (College/University (Ex. ETSU), Community College (Ex. Northeast State CC), or Technical Education/Industry Training (TCAT)) please go to question 16.

2. What grade are you in?
   • Freshman
   • Sophomore
   • Junior
   • Senior

3. Did any of your parents attend higher education (College/University (Ex. ETSU), Community College (Ex. Northeast State CC), or Technical Education/Industry Training (TCAT))?  
   • Yes, both
   • Yes, only one of them
   • None

4. What is the highest level of education completed by your father?
   • High School/GED
   • Technical School (ex. Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT))
   • Associates Degree (Community College)
   • Bachelor’s Degree (4 year university/college)
   • Master’s Degree
   • Advanced Graduate work or Ph.D.

5. What is the highest level of education completed by your mother?
   • High School/GED
   • Technical School (ex. Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT))
   • Associates Degree (Community College)
   • Bachelor’s Degree (4 year university/college)
   • Master’s Degree
   • Advanced Graduate work or Ph.D.

6. Are you considering attending any kind of higher education institution?
   • Yes, for sure
   • Do not know yet, but would like to
   • No way
7. Are legal factors limiting you from pursuing higher education?
   - Yes
   - No
8. Are economical (financial) factors limiting you from pursuing higher education?
   - Yes
   - No
9. Are social factors limiting you from pursuing higher education?
   - Yes
   - No
10. A collective impact path is used when there is a social complex problem that cannot be solved by an individual. In these cases, different organizations come together and utilize different resources with the purpose of helping each other achieve a common goal.

   Do you think you and your family members can benefit by having a path that specifically helps Hispanic students in East Tennessee go and excel in higher education (specifically addressing legal, economical, and social problems)?
   - Yes
   - No
11. What type of support systems do help you achieving your educational goals?
    - Mentor/Role Model
    - After school activities
    - Religious institutions
    - Student organizations/events
    - Other
12. Do you currently take part on any extra-curricular activities? (Please check all that apply, select multiple if necessary)
    - Music/Theater
    - Sports
    - Arts and Craft
    - Other
13. Have you ever been part of any advocacy program before?
    - Yes
    - No, but I would like to be part of one
    - No, I am not interested in being part of an advocacy program
14. Are you part of any student organization in your school?
    - Yes
    - No, but I would like to be part of one
    - No, I am not interested in being part of a student organization
15. Is there anything you would like to add regarding your experiences and challenges during high school? (Please add as much detail as possible)
If you are a high school student, the survey has ended. Thank you for your time.

16. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - High School/GED
   - Technical School (ex. Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT))
   - Associates Degree (Community College)
   - Bachelor’s Degree (4 year university/college)
   - Master’s Degree
   - Advanced Graduate work or Ph.D.

17. What is the highest level of education completed by your father?
   - High School/GED
   - Technical School (ex. Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT))
   - Associates Degree (Community College)
   - Bachelor’s Degree (4 year university/college)
   - Master’s Degree
   - Advanced Graduate work or Ph.D.

18. What is the highest level of education completed by your mother?
   - High School/GED
   - Technical School (ex. Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT))
   - Associates Degree (Community College)
   - Bachelor’s Degree (4 year university/college)
   - Master’s Degree
   - Advanced Graduate work or Ph.D.

19. Did you face any kind of legal challenges when pursuing higher education?
   - Yes
   - No

20. Did you face any kind of economical (financial) challenges when pursuing higher education?
   - Yes
   - No

21. Did you face any kind of social challenges when pursuing higher education?
   - Yes
   - No

22. Do you believe it is tougher for a Hispanic student to go and excel in higher education in comparison to an American student?
   - Yes
   - No

23. When you were a junior or senior in High School, do you think you would have benefited from a path that specifically helps Hispanic students in East Tennessee go and excel in higher education (specifically addressing Legal, Economic, and Social problems)?
   - Yes
   - No

24. Is there anything you would like to add regarding your experiences and challenges during high school? (Please add as much detail as possible)
Appendix B: Interview Questions

- Which high school did you go to?
- When did you first think about higher education?
- Was the legal challenge an obstacle when thinking about higher education? If so, how did you overcome it?
- Was the economic challenge an obstacle when thinking about higher education? If so, how did you overcome it?
- Was the social challenge an obstacle when thinking about higher education? If so, how did you overcome it?
- Were your counselors and parents helpful when applying to higher education?
- What higher education institution did you attend?
- Did you face any challenges while in higher education? If so, which challenges and how did you overcome them?
- Do you regret going to higher education?
VITA

EDWIN SOTO

Education: Oak Ridge Military Academy, Oak Ridge, NC

B.S. in Business Administration (Marketing emphasis)
    Milligan College,
    Johnson City, Tennessee, 2015

M.S. in Technology (Entrepreneurial Leadership concentration)
    East Tennessee State University,
    Johnson City, Tennessee, 2017

Professional Experience: Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University,
    Language and Culture Resource Center, 2016-2017