CSU Bakersfield School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering honored as the 2012 Example of Excelencia at the Baccalaureate level, nationally recognized at increasing Latino success in higher education

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. - Elected officials and higher education leaders from across the country joined Excelencia in Education at the U.S. Capitol on October 2nd, 2012 to honor CSU Bakersfield’s School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering as America’s top program for increasing academic opportunities and improving achievement for Latino students at the baccalaureate level. The accompanying release of “What Works for Latino Student Success in Higher Education” is part of a portfolio of hundreds of evidence-based practices that institutions and policy makers can draw on to improve Latino student success.

Latinos will have to earn 5.5 million college degrees by 2020 for America to achieve President Barack Obama’s goal of American world leadership in college degrees by 2020.

Over the past seven years, Excelencia in Education has systematically identified and evaluated more than 500 programs and departments that demonstrate with evidence that they effectively boost Latino enrollment, performance and graduation. Top honors this year went to programs run by Valencia College in Orlando, California State University Bakersfield, and The University of Texas, El Paso.

“America cannot become the world leader in college degrees, nor will it have a globally competitive workforce in the future, if it does not focus on improving Latino college completion,” said Rep. Charles Gonzalez, Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, who spoke at the event.

“CSU Bakersfield is at the forefront of meeting the challenge of improving higher educational achievement for Latino students,” said Sarita Brown, president of Excelencia in Education. “With 2020 quickly approaching, we have accumulated a significant portfolio of evidence-based practices that institutions and policy makers can and must put into action.”

CSUB’s School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering has 70 total faculty distributed into seven departments and offering twelve baccalaureate degrees and three graduate degrees. The school serves approximately 1900 full-time equivalent students yearly, and claims 1349 majors in STEM. NSME STEM graduates typically enter the workforce as researchers, teachers, or industry employees, or advance to graduate programs in top research universities nationwide.

“The School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering has vigorously engaged in increasing the number of students majoring in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) for the last six years. Our goal is that our graduating class parallels the demographics of Kern County,” said Dr. Julio R. Blanco, Dean of School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering. “We’ve succeeded in increasing Latino participation which is currently about 40 percent of the students in STEM. The addition of engineering has added a new pathway to well-paying jobs in our region and we would like to recognize the support of all the educational organizations and business partners, especially the Chevron Corporation’s $3 million dollar cumulative-gift since 2007.”

To download “What Works for Latino Student Success in Higher Education,” which includes detailed information about all of the programs recognized today, visit www.EdExcelencia.org.
“This compendium is a central component of the Examples of Excelencia initiative,” said Deborah Santiago, vice president of Excelencia in Education and author of the publication. “By sharing what works, we hope to prompt educators and policymakers to challenge the current status of Latino achievement in higher education and inspire these decision makers to work to increase Latino student success.”

Examples of Excelencia is the only national initiative to systematically identify and honor institution-based programs and departments that demonstrate with evidence that they effectively boost Latino enrollment, performance and graduation. It is supported by ACT, USA Funds, Diverse Issues in Higher Education, Southwest Airlines, EduK, Univision Communications and others.

Excelencia in Education is a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization whose mission is to accelerate Latino student success in higher education.

Dean Blanco accepted the award on behalf of the School, which also includes a check for $5,000 for the School. Dr. Blanco’s acceptance speech is provided below.

“I am privileged to be here accepting this recognition in the name of the faculty and staff of the School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering that are dedicated to increasing Latino and all student participation in STEM. The campus administration, in particular President Mitchell and Provost Coley in attendance with me today, have provided an environment that permits creativity and growth. The partnership with the community of Kern County has been critical for our success starting with middle and high schools, community colleges, and industry partners. In particular the Kern High School District, Superintendent Don Carter, and Bakersfield College, Deans Dan O’Connor and Hamid Eydgahi, have been key partners in expanding STEM opportunities to students. I want to mention the financial support that Chevron Corporation has provided to the School over the years along with other companies. The federal agencies, particularly the US Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, and the US Department of Agriculture have provided financial support through grants that has allowed the School to make an impact in Latino representation in STEM. I too want to recognize the consultants at WRD, particularly Melanie Tang and Christos Valiotis, for their help and insight and working with the faculty to achieve success. And of course, I want to thank and commend Excelencia in Education, Sarita and Deborah, for their hard work and bringing to the nation the cause of Latino postsecondary education and empowerment. Thank you, thank you, thank you very much.”
From Left to Right:
- Deborah Santiago, Vice President of Excelencia in Education
- Sarita Brown, President of Excelencia in Education
- Charles Gonzalez, US Congressman Representing 20th District of Texas
- Elsa Núñez, President, Eastern Connecticut University
- Julio Blanco, Dean of the School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering, CSUB
- Soraya Coley, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, CSUB
- Barbara Mitchell, First Lady, CSUB
- Horace Mitchell, President, CSUB
Full Group photo