

# Futuro Universitario: *Helping Latino Families Access Higher Education*



# Introduction

Education is an important issue for the Latino community. To many parents, their children's college education means more opportunities, a better quality of life, and "the best inheritance that as a parent you can give to your children" (quote from parent participant). According to a 2017 report by the National Center of Education Statistics, 37 percent of Latinos pursue higher education in the United States. Of those 37 percent, only 23 percent go on to complete a two or four year higher education degree (The Hechinger Report). Even though these statistics are somewhat low, they have been increasing every year. In addition, 86 percent of Latino parents say it's extremely or very important that their children earn a college degree (Mi Familia Vota).

With this in mind Futuro Universitario's culturally-responsive curriculum guides Hispanic/Latino parents and students to get a head start in accessing a higher education. It is important to not only have students involved in the education process, but also their parents because they are the student's support system. Parents also need to be involved for financial reasons, such as being aware of the cost of going to college and finding the means to help their children succeed. These reasons and statistics are why Futuro Universitario was created and why workshops for parents and students will not only improve Nebraska statistics, but also national statistics in a positive way.

Futuro Universitario was created by Luis Sotelo, Vice President of the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Doane University. In partnership with El Centro de las Americas, Nebraska Appleseed, and the generosity of the Latino American Commission, we launched Futuro Universitario in Lincoln. Thus, offering a series of three workshops culturally tailored to the Latino community. The workshops informed parents about the U.S education system, the college application process and respective financial aid options, and what their students can do to successfully prepare for college. The goal is to help parents overcome obstacles faced in Latino families by offering necessary knowledge and tools to advocate for their students, thus supporting them in pursuing higher education.

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During the first session we explored the statistics on higher education among Latinos, and the obstacles faced in the Latino community when applying to college. Additionally, we reviewed required classes and GPA for a college application. The second session focused on how high school students can prepare for applying to college, what colleges like to see from their applicants, and tools for students who want to attend college but may not know exactly what they would like to study. The third session centered around financial aid, including how the FAFSA works, and where to locate financial aid resources. The following pages contain a more detailed summary of each session.

The workshops brought together 40 parents and their students. There was significant enthusiasm from the community to continue these workshops to dive deeper into the content. Our hope is to continue offering

Futuro Universitario, and create a follow-up work group with parents of eleventh and twelfth grade students who would be meeting as important deadlines arise, such as in the fall when it's time to turn in the FAFSA and finalize college personal statements and other essays.

Additionally, the need to educate and empower parents in supporting their students in the pursuit of higher education expands far beyond the Latino community in Lincoln. Thus, we believe it is essential to share this information as widely as possible, in rural Nebraska communities and with other populations, such as Native American and refugees.

## Session 1: Higher Education, Required Classes, GPA, and Rank

Only 37 percent of the Hispanic population in the U.S. enter college after highschool. Based on that statistic, only thirteen percent of Latinos graduate with college degrees. There are various obstacles that contribute to these low statistics, such as:

1. Transferring from a community college to a university may result in credit hours not counting towards the new school. To avoid this, it is best to research the transfer process and requirements at the school you intend to attend.
2. Disproportionate counselor to student ratio, usually 1 counselor to 600 students. This can lead to students not having enough guidance. Therefore, it is important that parents and students are proactive and take the initiative to schedule appointments with counselors to ensure their questions are answered and that the student is on track for graduation and college prep.
3. Lack of assistance from mentors and or people with experience. To help students make their admissions process easier, it is important for them and their parents to be in contact with someone in college or someone who is familiar with the process to provide guidance and support.
4. Students are not taking the necessary classes to graduate. It is important that students know the necessary classes and credits in their high schools to graduate, and research the admission requirements at the colleges they are interested in.



## College Admission Required Classes

The requirements for high school graduation are not always the same for college admission. Thus, it is important to understand what most colleges look for when making an admission decision. It is still important to research the different requirements of each university that you are interested in ahead of time to make sure all required classes are taken. These required classes may include:

- 4 years of English (Reading and Writing, Literature, etc.)
- 4 years of Math (Pre-Algebra, Algebra, Algebra II, Trigonometry, Geometry, Calculus)
- 3 years of Sciences (Physical Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Anatomy - Better on college application if 4 years are taken)
- 3 years of Social Sciences (U.S. History, World History, Geography, Government, Sociology, Psychology - Better on college application if 4 years are taken)
- 2 years of Language (Spanish, German, French, etc.) \* Must be the same language each year

Some of the important factors that colleges and scholarship review committees look at are GPA (Grade Point Average) and ranking. Rank is similar to GPA, but rank refers to the place in which student is listed in the same grade based on GPA compared to their peers. GPA carries over each year, so it is important that students maintain a good GPA every semester. A higher rank and GPA will open doors to more scholarships and colleges, including admission to prestigious universities. Parents and students can calculate their GPA based on their grades. To do so, you need the point system for your respective school (Example shown below, also found in grade report from school).

For more details and examples, see [GPA Calculator](#).

Grade	4.0 Scale	4.0+ Scale
A+	4.0	4.3
A	4.0	4.0
A-	3.7	3.7
B+	3.3	3.3
B	3.0	3.0
B-	2.7	2.7
C+	2.3	2.3
C	2.0	2.0
C-	1.7	1.7
D+	1.3	1.3
D	1.0	1.0
D-	0.7	0.7
F	0.0	0.0

Grade	GPA
A	4.0
B	3.0
C	2.0
D	1.0
F	0.0

# Session 2: Success in the College Application Process

## Set Yourself Up for Success

There are various key steps students can take during their high school career to increase opportunities for success when applying to college and scholarships.

### ***1. Academics***

a. GPA and Rank: both carry over every year, so it is important to begin in good standing and maintain them over each semester.

b. Test Prep:

ACT: Most colleges in the U.S. use this scale to test college readiness in Math, Social Studies, Science, Language Arts and an optional Writing portion (some colleges require this portion). The top score that can be obtained is a 36.

SAT: Not as popular in the state of Nebraska as the ACT, but tests similar subjects as ACT. The score range is from 400 to 1600, with 1600 being the highest.

In Nebraska high schools, the [ACT](#) is offered for free ONCE during the students' junior year. The cost to take these tests outside of school can vary by state; in Nebraska the cost for the ACT is \$50.50 (no writing section). It is recommended that students take the ACT or SAT at least three times and study for it a few months in advance.

### ***2. Awards and honors***

It can be beneficial for students to keep track of their academic and extracurricular achievements, such as the honor roll and placings in competitions, among other awards, when applying for scholarships and colleges. It is also helpful to have achievements like these to put on their resumes.

### ***3. Extracurricular activities and community engagement***

Involvement in extracurricular and community activities provides students with enriching social and cultural experiences as well as developmental growth opportunities to gain both soft and hard skills necessary to be a productive member of society. Further, involvement increases opportunities for students to receive scholarships for college, thus it is important that during high school, students explore interests and get involved. In order to appeal to more scholarships and include such activities in a resume, students should be consistent in their involvement, rather than only being engaged during their senior year.

#### ***4. Personality and passion***

Students' ability to demonstrate their personality (what makes you uniquely you) and passion are important because they help students stand out in the college admission process. Showing the college who you are and what you aspire to achieve will help students find an institution where they feel supported and can accomplish their personal and professional goals.

### **Connect to resources, scholarships and colleges**

#### ***Scholarships***

There are organizations and websites, such as [Education Quest](#), that provide scholarship search engines, financial aid assistance (filing FAFSA when it opens each October) and other college access services. [Scholly](#) is a scholarship search engine and provides resources on writing essays (\$2/month membership). It is crucial for students to begin searching for scholarships the summer between junior and senior year and continue throughout senior year as new scholarships become available.

#### ***Frame Your Experiences***

College admission and review teams may evaluate the students' high school career using the following methods, so investing in quality work in these areas is essential.

1. Applications: personal information on college applications
2. Letters of Recommendations: written by a teacher, supervisor, or person most related to the subject area relevant to the scholarship/award
3. Interviews: college and or scholarship interviews
4. Social Media: be cautious of the content in your social media channels, as this can be a factor to an application being denied
5. Essays: the essay prompts (questions) will ask you to write on topics that allow you to express who you are, what you have done, and what your goals are
6. Resume: detailing academics, accomplishments, extracurricular activities, work, and service experience

#### ***Not Sure What Path to Take?***

Some students do not necessarily know what they would like to do when starting college. Here are a few resources that may help students find interests and careers:

- [Mynextmove.org](#)
- [Careerstop.org](#)





# Session 3: Financial Aid Options

One of the determining factors for students applying to college is the financial aspect of the process. This can be the most frustrating step a student and or parent may face when determining whether or not they can go to college. Luckily there are many resources that can make the financial aid process easy for families.

## *Cost of Attending College*

1. Tuition and fees will vary from college to college and families are encouraged to understand the actual cost of tuition, as institutional scholarships may make it more affordable, in some cases, than the listed price often called a “sticker price.” Tuition can also depend on whether the student will be considered an out of state student or an in state student. In state cost of attendance is typically less expensive. Many private institutions do not differentiate between in-state or out-of state tuition. It may just be one tuition price for all students.
2. Other college expenses:
  - Housing: includes room (dorm) and board (meals), but if there are students who prefer to live at home and are close enough to the school, they may opt out of this.
  - Travel costs (travel to and from the institution and local travel)
  - Cost of books
  - Student fees

*To the right is an example breakdown of the cost of attendance at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for the 2018-2019 school year*

		Tuition & Fees	Housing & Meals	Books & Supplies	Personal Expenses	Loan Fees	Total
<b>Undergraduate</b>							
Resident	Undergraduate Residence Hall	\$9,522	\$11,830	\$1,044	\$3,320	\$64	\$25,780
	Off-Campus	\$9,522	\$11,830	\$1,044	\$3,320	\$64	\$25,780
	Living at Home	\$9,522	\$5,116	\$1,044	\$3,320	\$64	\$19,066
Non-Resident							
	Undergraduate Residence Hall	\$25,828	\$11,830	\$1,044	\$3,320	\$64	\$42,086
	Off-Campus	\$25,828	\$11,830	\$1,044	\$3,320	\$64	\$42,086
	Living at Home	\$25,828	\$5,116	\$1,044	\$3,320	\$64	\$35,372

## **FAFSA**

The FAFSA can be accessed at [Federal website](https://studentaid.ed.gov/) (https://studentaid.ed.gov/) where students should apply for federal student aid: Pell Grant, Stafford Loans. The application opens for filing on October 1 of every year. Students with high school senior standing will file it for the first time if attending college after high school. The colleges will want to have access to the filed FAFSA so they can create a financial aid

package according to family's financial aid profile. The college financial aid package may include financial aid in the form of federal and state government aid, work study, and institutional scholarships (awarded by the college).

In order to file the FAFSA, it is important that parents have their most recent tax information. For parents who might not be U.S. permanent residents or citizens, they may file their taxes using an ITIN number.

Once the FAFSA is completed and students have reviewed all financial aid packages and offers, students and parents may find it beneficial to contact the financial aid office at the university if financial aid package can better meet family's needs, as well as weigh in the other options for attendance.

### ***Loans***

Subsidized loans: This student must pay back the loan, but there is no interest accumulating while the student is studying as the government covers the interest.

Unsubsidized loans: This student must pay back the loan, but interest does accumulate from the beginning as government does not cover the interest.

### ***Pell Grant***

Federal grant that can offer up to about \$6,000 per year, but if family income changes from year to year, it may affect the award amount offered.

### ***Scholarships for Immigrant Students***

Immigrant students (Dreamer, undocumented, DACA, TPS) regardless of immigration status can go to college. A social security number is not mandatory to complete the college application process. Furthermore, immigrant students in Nebraska are eligible for in-state tuition rates. However, they are not eligible for financial assistance funded by the federal or state government (i.e. FAFSA). They are eligible for privately funded scholarships. Below are scholarships open to immigrant students in Nebraska.

- [Susan Buffett Scholarship](#)
- [Barrientos Scholarship Foundation](#)
- [True Potential Scholarship](#) (community colleges only)

For further information on other available scholarships, please visit the [Nebraska Appleseed Scholarship Guide](#) and download the app DACA Scholar.

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# Conclusion

The workshops benefited students and parents who may have not known how to prepare themselves for college. Having 40 parents and students attend these workshops has indicated that there is a need and interest among the Latino community regarding the college preparation process.

While the workshops are tailored for parents, the feedback demonstrates that students benefit from the learning experience as well in preparing for college success. We also received feedback from parents to include more information about immigrant and DACA students, which will be included in future workshops.

Our vision is to work with parents and their eleventh and twelfth graders, who are in the process of applying to college. Additionally, we seek to share this information with other interested populations, such as the Native American and refugee communities. It is our hope that Futuro Universitario helps young Nebraskans step closer towards higher education and opportunities for themselves, their families, and communities.

