

SUPPORT HISPANIC & LATINO/A STUDENTS

Asset-Based, Culturally-Conscious
Approaches to Engage,
Support & Retain

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Terminology Matters

Latino, Latina, Hispanic, Latinx, Latine... all these terms matter when it comes to people identifying themselves and being identified by others. And there can be complex feelings about what terms they identify with, based on histories and associations that differ from person to person due to their family's country of origin, where they grew up and more.

Dr. Judith Robles, assistant dean of students at Arizona State University - West Campus and Dr. Amy Golden, assistant dean of students at Arizona State University, said in a PaperClip webinar that terminology can often fluctuate based on generational terms and those that strive to be more inclusive. For instance, during the "Latino/a Students: Design Identity Conscious, Asset Based & Culturally Relevant Initiatives That Validate, Engage and Support Their Success" webinar, they explained that the term "Latinx" is often not as popular, in part because it can't be pronounced in Spanish.

Robles and Golden, plus Duke University School of Medicine's "Ask the OEDI" (Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) blog, outlined the following terminology details...

Hispanic: A term that is telling you about *Language*.

- Refers to a person with ancestry from a country whose primary language is Spanish
- Viewed as the heritage, nationality, lineage or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before arriving in the United States
- The term was first used in the 1980 U.S. Census

Latino/a: A term that is telling you about *Geography*.

- Refers to a person with origins from anywhere in Latin America (Mexico, South and Central America) and the Caribbean
- This is a gendered term, as Spanish nouns are either feminine or masculine – so *Latino* is masculine and *Latina* is feminine

Personal Choice

When Gallup asked Hispanic and Latino/a Americans which term they'd choose for their ethnic subgroup, they answered:

- Hispanic: 23%
- Latino: 15%
- Latinx: 4%
- Does Not Matter: 57%

If they were put in a position to choose, reported CNN, most respondents leaned toward the term *Hispanic* that focuses on being of Spanish-speaking origin, while *Latino* is less specific because it refers to Latin America as a whole.

Source: CNN, 8/5/21

Terminology Matters *(continued)*

Latinx and Latine

- *Latinx* is a gender-neutral version of *Latino/a* since there are some Spanish speakers who are gender fluid, not identifying exclusively with the masculine or feminine
- Since Spanish has no gender-neutral nouns or pronouns, like “they” or “it,” all nouns typically end in either “o” or “a” – and a mixed gender group is automatically referred to using the masculine version (e.g., “niño” is the word for boy and “niña” is the word for girl, while a group of boys and girls is “niños”)
- The term *Latinx* attempts to correct this issue
- Some members of the Latino community feel this term has been imposed on them by an English-speaking audience, since the “x” makes sense to those speaking English but it doesn’t really translate into Spanish
- So, some people have started using the term *Latine* instead because it flows better

Sources: Gallup, June 1-July 5, 2021, as referenced in “Latino/a Students: Design Identity Conscious, Asset Based & Culturally Relevant Initiatives That Validate, Engage and Support Their Success” webinar, PaperClip Communications, 2/23/23; Duke University School of Medicine, “Ask the OEDI” Blog, 9/8/22

To Keep in Mind

- The term *Latino/a/x* has become frequently used online and in academic circles.
- People who identify as Hispanic, Latino or Spanish may be any race.
- “People with origins from Latin America or the Caribbean may consider themselves as Latino or Hispanic, or prefer neither and consider their race to be their country of origin (such as Colombian, Dominican, or Mexican American). The best answer to use may depend on the specific situation, the person’s personal preference, and the context,” according to the Office of EDI at Duke University School of Medicine.
- Not every country in Latin America speaks primarily Spanish. For instance, Portuguese is the primary language in Brazil.
- Other countries, including those in Latin America and the Caribbean, have their own complicated terms and identities, too.

Creating Inclusive Affinity Groups and Community Spaces

Campus *affinity groups* come in all shapes and sizes: living learning communities, cultural fraternities and sororities, discussion groups, student organizations and more. By linking Latino/a and Hispanic students via a common interest, purpose or culture, affinity groups can help them find meaning, belonging and community to get through college.

These types of groups can serve as students' home base to connect with the larger campus community, UC Berkeley psychology professor Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton told *Greater Good Magazine*. He and a team of researchers studied undergraduates involved in the Casa Magdalena Mora Theme Program at Berkeley, where Latino students could participate in retreats, weekly leadership seminars and more.

The researchers measured participants' stress levels over time, finding that participating in the theme program protected students against stress. They even found that those living in the theme house had lower stress levels a year later, reported *Greater Good*.

Mendoza-Denton told the publication that these research findings "make the case that affinity groups actually help minority students cope with what can otherwise be a very challenging transition," and not get in the way of student success. "It's almost like a little vaccine at the beginning of your stay at Berkeley," he said.

However, Mendoza-Denton emphasized that, even though affinity groups can become a source of strength for students, it's important that they remain open to other groups, too. "If you're in a Latinx group, for example, don't only have Latinx friends," he told *Greater Good*. "I can't emphasize that enough." He said Latino students need both a place to celebrate and learn about their culture as well as "practice affiliating with out-group members."

An Example: Affinity and Community Spaces at Harvard

Harvard University's (MA) Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging sponsors Affinity & Community Spaces, which are "a series of open conversations where Harvard community members can connect with others who share their identities, life experiences, or desire to learn, reflect, and connect with others."

Events center around a theme for each gathering. For instance, in November 2023, spaces were held particularly for Jewish and Israeli Community Members and Arab, Muslim and Palestinian Community Members.

"Affinity groups actually help minority students cope with what can otherwise be a very challenging transition. It's almost like a little vaccine at the beginning of your stay at Berkeley."

– UC Berkeley Psychology Professor
Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton

Creating Inclusive Affinity Groups and Community Spaces

(continued)

Participants have an opportunity to respond, reflect on their own experience and connect with others with all Harvard affiliates welcome. Affinity spaces usually offer breakout rooms for the following identities, including:

- Allies
- Asian/Asian American
- Black
- Disability/Neurodiversity
- First Gen/Low Income
- Jewish
- International
- Intersectional
- Latinx
- LGBTQIA+
- Muslim
- Native American/Indigenous/Pacific Islander

Sources: Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging, Harvard University; *Greater Good Magazine*, 1/25/22

Taking a Look: On Our Campus

What types of affinity spaces and/or organizations are available to support Latino/a and Hispanic students on our campus?

Where might others be developed?

Old Dominion U. Onboarding Orientation Helps Incoming Latine Students Navigate Campus Life

The two-day Latine Experience Onboarding (LEO) orientation at Old Dominion University (VA) gave a dozen freshman and transfer Latine students the opportunity to move in early, increase their comfort levels and begin to navigate their first year on campus. “We’re giving them a roadmap so they know where to go if they run into problems that first day,” said Ana Luz Williams, associate director of marketing for undergraduate admissions, who organized LEO. “The goal is to retain that student and make them feel they have a family here that they belong to.”

Participating students created vision boards to strategize how they can counteract fears in positive ways, the Old Dominion University News Center reported. They built trust and teamwork by going through a ropes course. They were introduced to local organizations such as the Hampton Roads Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. And they visited campus offices like the health center, the library and the Center for Major Exploration & Mane Connect Success Coaching to get familiar with available resources.

“With so many of these students being first-generation college students, it is important for them to build these relationships with other Latines who they can relate to,” said Mariela Romero, graduate assistant for Latine initiatives in the Office of Intercultural Relations. “The LEO program offers resources, connections, and community, which in turn help with retention and provides a path towards graduation.”

“I have never been away from my family, but LEO has invited me in. LEO is a family that always is there for you even after those two days. They are very welcoming and friendly to everyone. LEO helped me get to know the campus and let me know that I’m not alone.”
– Jabsiry Hernandez-Velasquez, a Freshman Who Participated in LEO

Source: Old Dominion University News Center, 9/25/23

Connecting in Community with the Cafecito y Consejos Podcast at Metropolitan State U. of Denver

At Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), Family & Community within the office of Orientation, Transfer and Re-Engagement works to foster partnerships and a sense of belonging by involving families and communities in students' lives.

Part of their efforts targeting Hispanic and Latino/a students include sharing a regular Cafecitos y Consejos podcast.

According to the Spotify description, the podcast “is for first-generation high school students, parents and families that are thinking about college or applying at MSU Denver, or currently MSU Denver students that need some consejos from our MSU Denver Latinx professionals.”

The podcast invites professional staff, faculty and alumni to share stories about their own higher education journey and their backgrounds. Participants share advice – or *consejos* – plus their own struggles, how family, friends or mentors supported them and much more.

A sampling of podcast guests include:

- Evelyn, an immigrant Latina educator from Guatemala who began working at MSU Denver in 2015 as Coordinator of New Student Orientation and then worked in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) as the Student Retention Specialist, Assistant Director of Academic Achievement, and now as CAMP Director serving students from migrant and seasonal farm working backgrounds.
- Del, a Mexican American/Chicano who is a social justice scholar and practitioner committed to promoting access, diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education. He directs and promotes strategies and operations aimed at ensuring MSU Denver becomes a model Hispanic Serving Institution. As part of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, he works to promote the ongoing development of an equitable and inclusive campus community that nurtures learning and growth for all its members.
- Keylen, a Media Relations Specialist for the institution who previously was the public relations and communications contact for the Better Business Bureau in Denver, serving as their media spokesperson in Spanish and English. She holds her Mexican roots very dear to her heart.

Sources: Orientation, Transfer and Re-engagement, Metropolitan State University of Denver; MSU Denver Family and Support “Cafecitos y Consejos” Podcast, Spotify.com

The Meaning

“**Cafecito**, or ‘little coffee,’ is the common Latin American word to refer to the tradition of conversing with friends over a cup of coffee,” according to the Fort Smith Public Schools (AR) Cafecito ELL Special Programs Department.

And “**Consejos**” is advice, according to the Collins Dictionary.

Sources: CollinsDictionary.com; Fort Smith Public Schools, www.fortsmithschools.org

The Latino Community Resource Center at Austin Peay State Emphasizes Belonging

Latino students at Austin Peay State University (TN) have multiple outlets to find connections and community through the Latino Community Resource Center (LCRC), often aiding in retention efforts.

The LCRC, located in the University Center, “creates an inclusive environment for the entire Austin Peay State University (APSU) community, fostering meaningful dialogue and cultural understanding of Latino communities,” explains their website. “We retain and empower Latino students to succeed, giving them a sense of belonging until graduation and beyond.”

The LCRC strives to create a family-like environment “Where Strangers Become Amigos, and Amigos Become Family.” They offer cultural activities, educational lectures and celebrations to gather and share Latino cultures. Plus, they host programs and provide resources centered on empowering, aiding and retaining Latino students at APSU.

Events

An **AMIGOS-GIVING** event at the LCRC “is like Thanksgiving but with your amigos!” Participants can enjoy games, crafts, food, music, a selfie backdrop and a photo printer in community.

The LCRC also hosts a **¡Si Se Pudo! Graduation Celebration** that “recognizes students and their loved ones who have contributed to the student’s success during their time at Austin Peay State University.” It’s a ceremony designed to celebrate students’ personal success and academic achievement.

The entire Latino Community Resource Center website can be read in either Spanish or English!

A Welcoming Space

All students are welcomed to access the physical space offered by the LCRC, too, which includes:

- A quiet study room
- A fridge, microwave and toaster oven
- An area to relax between classes with board games, comfortable seating and a TV
- Resources like computers, laptops, graphic calculators and a printer

Learn more about what’s available at APSU here: www.apsu.edu/latino/.

Source: Latino Students, Austin Peay State University

Latinx Heritage Month Events

“The Latino Community Resource Center is proud to celebrate the cultures, contributions, and resilience of Latinx, Hispanic and Latino-identified communities around the world,” they declare. Events include:

- A Kick-off Celebration
- Mastering LinkedIn: How to Build Your Brand
- Annual Art Exhibit and Open Mic Night
- Aventura Cultura: Piñata Making
- Pride Celebration at the LCRC
- Crafts and Cuentos (short stories)
- Honoring Latino Military Heroes
- LCRC Student Retreat