

## Kentucky State University

### Office of Enrollment Management

**Hispanic and Latino Initiatives:  
Engaging Minority and Culturally Diverse Communities  
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The Kentucky State University Office of Enrollment Management (OEM) recognizes that the Hispanic/Latino population is the fastest growing “minority” in the Commonwealth, and is aggressively preparing to provide access and educational opportunities to this growing population. While today most of the Hispanic/Latino children are middle to high school age, this status will dramatically change within the immediate decade. According to a recent report by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (*Knocking at the College Door*), the number of Hispanic/Latino Kentucky high school graduates is projected to increase from the current 676 (2004-05) to 3,505 in 2010, and 7, 219 by the year 2014. To meet the challenges and opportunities presented by these projections, OEM is aggressively pursuing various initiatives that are designed to increase access to this population while facilitating a level of cultural awareness consistent with our historical mission of diversity and inclusion.

The Office of Enrollment Management has formalized our desire to better serve this emerging population through the development of clearly articulated admissions goals for Hispanic/Latino students, an administrative appointment for Hispanic/Latino recruitment and initiatives, and the conversion of our student and parent marketing resources to Spanish, in efforts to bridge barriers associated with language.

The primary charges of OEM’s Assistant Director of Hispanic Recruitment are to identify and facilitate visitations to key demographic areas with a high Hispanic population and high probability of attending college, (2) create a Recruiting Life Cycle Management tool and coordinate the elements to increase higher education access for Hispanics and Latinos, (3) sustain recruiting efficiency regarding the Hispanic and Latino community, (4) formalize and host special on and off campus events and programs that are designed to address the various challenges faced by the Hispanic and Latino community within the Commonwealth.

We are striving to overcome these obstacles by understanding the motivations of the Hispanic and Latino community, and embracing their culture within our own legacy of inclusion.

### ***Why Engage a Minority or Culturally Diverse Communities?***

Like most of you, Kentucky State University has a non-discriminatory policy. From its initial founding in 1886 as a normal school for the training of black teachers for the black schools of Kentucky, Kentucky State University has grown and evolved through its historical commitment to inclusion and access, without regard to race, age, sex, national origin, or economic status.

Engagement of minority and culturally diverse communities is pursued through our tripartite mission. I would like to share with you a summary of the challenges and opportunities that have resulted from our experiences. For the lack of a better characterization, I present these as our “Lessons Learned” regarding our identification of the best practices for engaging Kentucky minority and culturally diverse communities through our Teaching, Our Research, and Our Service. These lessons are all highly related, and are presented to acknowledge the true nature of engagement as an honest and ever-opening channel of communication.

### *Lesson 1: The need to Understanding the community*

Certainly our commitment and desire to engage the minority community was evident. But how could we better understand the history and culture of that community?

The most effective practice also has proven to be the most obvious: through socialization. We have found that by meeting one-on-one or in small groups and focusing on the expressed concerns of community representatives, we are better able to develop their trust and respect. Personal relationships result from this socialization, and it is those relationships that have proven most effective in fostering the community’s participation in our programs.

For example: We recognize that the Hispanic/Latino population is the fastest growing “minority” in the Commonwealth, and desired to provide access and educational opportunities to this growing population. While today most of the Hispanic/Latino children are middle to high school age, this status will dramatically change within the immediate decade.

According to a recent report by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (Knocking at the College Door), the number of Hispanic/Latino Kentucky high school graduates is projected to increase from 3,505 in 2010, to 7, 219 by the year 2014. To meet the challenges and opportunities presented by these projections, we are pursuing various levels of engagement that are designed to increase access to this population, while facilitating a level of cultural awareness consistent with our historical mission of diversity and inclusion. Our efforts to better understand the community directly informed us of the various challenges faced by the Hispanic and Latino community, as they try to assimilate within the Commonwealth, including:

- Poverty

- Cultural representation
- Inadequate schools
- Fear of using services because of immigration status (a lack of trust toward government and other institutions).
- Work schedules (multiple jobs) prevent many from attending events and accessing services.

Kentucky State University's Hispanic Outreach Initiative was established and rose out of our desire to engage that community in addressing these challenges. To that effect, the initiative:

- Builds relationships and partnerships with organizations, institutions, individuals, etc. in an effort to better serve the Hispanic/Latino community
- Explores Venues for Educational Access Opportunities for Latinos/ Recruitment
- Seeks to introduce coalition building as a tool for community development - related matters by serving as a Consultant/Resource
- Guides the development of a rich Hispanic/Latino environment at KSU and connect the Latino community with KSU

The Hispanic Outreach Initiative at KSU is about empowering the Latino community and thus supports the social, cultural, and educational infrastructure of our state.

### *Lesson 2: Interacting with Innovators and Key Leaders*

We have also found it helpful to fully understand the hierarchy within the community. We desire to interact with innovators and respected key leaders who are in good standing in the community. Communicating with key innovators about our outreach and engagement opportunities provides critical opportunities for the community to validate the integrity and goodwill of our intentions. We also have found that it helps eliminate or at least reduce any initial suspicions about a program.

Put more simply, we let the innovators sell the benefits of the program to the key leaders. When they have perceived the benefits of our programs, those programs have been successful. When they express doubts, we revise it. To summarize, we encourage the community to assume a critical role the educational process.

For example: Our Community Resource Development (CRD) area supports communities, families, and local governments in carrying out the important social and economic

activities that allow them to gain access to the resources they need to improve their standard of living. CRD Provides education and technical assistance to local people, communities, and governments in addressing social and economic conditions for sustainable development outcomes. Primary areas of interest are community building, social capital, and leadership capacity building for low income and limited resource audiences. CRD engages the minority community in training that centers around:

1. Tapping Diversity
2. Putting People Styles to Work for Building Effective Teams
3. Building Community Support for Equity at School
4. Equity for Learning: Multicultural Curriculum Development
5. Workplace Diversity

### *Lesson 3: Identify Issues, and Find Solutions*

To effectively engage in outreach in the minority community, it is important to identify the relevant problems that exist within that community. If we are not currently working with a particular community, we generally do not assume that they will approach us for help or assistance. We have found that some of our preconceived ideas regarding critical community issues have been false, so it has proven helpful to be flexible in our thinking and approach to educational programming.

For example: A major objective of our Research and Extension Apprenticeship Program (REAP) is to introduce young men and women to the many careers in science, research, education, and public service. A second objective is to provide "hands on" experiences in the various career options within agriculture and related fields.

The program provides a summer of learning to motivated students interested in gaining "first hand" experiences in the various fields of agricultural sciences and natural resources. Interns are engaged in scientific research, agricultural extension, natural resources, and other related career opportunities.

REAP interns stand out as young men and women who have the potential for leadership roles in their high schools and 95% of the programs interns have continued postsecondary study and earned college degrees.

### *Finally: Evaluate, Change, Do it Again*

There are always new people coming into any community and new audiences to address. Just because a program has been conducted once, we avoid assuming that everyone participated. Evaluate the program, change it, and do it again.

For example: Our Small Limited-Resource Minority Farmers Conference. The first conference was held in 1983 at the Land Between the Lakes and was a basic informational conference introducing who's who and the small farm program at KSU. 1989 the "Black Farmers Conference" evolved to include programs for youth. In 1996 the Conference received the current name: Small Limited-Resource Minority Farmers Conference and included strategies for small farmers, listening sessions, and careers in agriculture for youth participants. The conference now focuses on estate and retirement planning, USDA overview, alternative enterprises, tours, health fairs and concurrent sessions where an individual can meet one-on-one with a USDA representative. This year's conference engaged 176 farmers.

In closing, The most recent United States Census reports that African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos represent ever growing segments of the populations of both the United States and of Kentucky. We, therefore, continue to embrace our historical legacy, and pursue an articulated commitment to engage the minority communities of the Commonwealth.