



Lessons from Campus Outreach to Latino Immigrants In Western Wisconsin, 2008-2018

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UWL outreach to Latino immigrant communities

- Since late 1990s, growing Latino & Immigrant presence caught social service agencies, schools, hospitals, and clinics unprepared.
- Currently, **total 20,000 Latinos & Latino immigrants in 1 hour radius of La Crosse**. 7,500 in 5 county region of **Western Wisconsin**, out of 245,000 population. 12,500 in bordering Iowa and Minnesota counties. 1/3 are recent immigrants, many southern Mexican and Central American indigenous immigrants (**Mixtec, Mam, Tzetzal, Tojolab'al**), different from Hispanicized **mestizos** (mixed Spanish-Indian) who are Spanish-speaking.
- **UWL Institute for Latina/o and Latin American Studies (ILLAS)** developed **annual regional conference** to share best practices among researchers, teachers, and service providers working with Latinos and Latino immigrants.
- ILLAS created **Immigration Community Conversations** with faith communities, schools, League of Women Voters, and other partners.
- Latino, Latinamericanist, and Spanish faculty work annually with Latino student groups and Spanish club members to organize outreach activities.





- UW- La Crosse has seen expansion of Latina/o students since 2000:
 - 2000: 115
 - 2010: 210
 - 2017: 358
- Larger and more active Latino student and faculty have developed more service learning, community engagement, and outreach opportunities targeting Latinos and immigrants.

Outreach developed from:

- Taking visiting scholars to visit area schools with high number of Latino student enrollments.
- Developing culture-based, intergenerational service learning opportunities that connected faculty, college students, and local schools with strong Latino enrollments.
- Interest by Spanish majors and minors (including Latino and White students) in developing opportunities to practice Spanish at community centers, clinics, and social agencies.
- Campus understood how expanding regional Latino population presented an opportunity to increase diversity and to make up for shrinking pool of traditional White college-age population across the upper Midwest.
- Faculty and students learned about issues facing immigrants and to strategize for additional campus outreach.



Some Outreach Activities



- **Afterschool tutoring and mentoring programs** with grades 4-12 students in Norwalk, Sparta, & Arcadia schools with high Latino enrollments.
- **Annual retreat on campus** for Latina middle and high school students to engage in career exploration, to experience dorms, and learn about college.
- Collaborated with faith communities to develop **Latino Community Resource Center** to offer conversational language classes, access to computers, legal clinic, and rides to physicians' appointments.
- Developed **Spanish-language and Latino cultural competency among medical practitioners in regional clinics and hospitals** for faculty and Spanish majors/minors interested in exploring medical careers.
- Developed **Parent College** to educate parents to help children to create college-going profile by learning about college application process, importance of community service, completion of demanding curriculum, signing up for AP courses, and learn about financial aid. **Partnered with teachers and teacher aides to present in Spanish or to interpret as needed.**

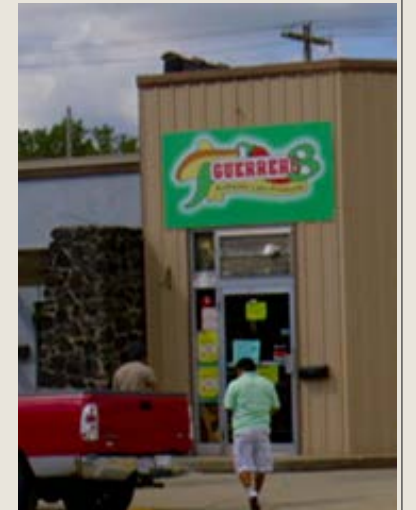
Concerns about DACA students in education



- Immigrant families' **low income impedes student access to higher education**; but locally, they form a high percentage of graduating classes, **10 to 30%**.
- **DACA students** classified as "Out-of-State" **pay more tuition but not eligible for state/federal financial aid even though parents pay taxes** (Wisconsin immigrant households pay \$1.4 billion in federal taxes, and pay over \$675 million in state and local taxes) but children of undocumented parents are not eligible for financial aid. **FYI:** UWL, tuition and fees are **\$17,591**; Western Technical College charges **\$5,100**.
- Lack of student or family access to **drivers' licenses** leads to inability to attend extracurricular activities or to work afterschool or to access health services.
- **Mental health** challenge: *"Undocumented life . . . is hard. Poverty, precarious employment, poor access to health care, discrimination and trauma . . . often lead to **depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder**. Access to mental health treatment is scant, the demands of [survival] are overwhelming, fear of discovery discourages people from seeking care, and the stigma of mental illness perpetuates . . . silence"* Carla Cornejo, NYT Letter, 2016.

Best Practices observed

- **Improved relationship to Latino population when local population perceives them as an asset and as contributing to the community.** In Arcadia, Wisconsin, Latinos have resurrected the dormant, empty store fronts, are well-organized and fundraise.
- **Local business community mentors Latino and Immigrant entrepreneurs,** work with county to provide licenses and consult on how to make immigrant businesses more welcoming of old-stock immigrant population (menus and signs in English, open house, samples).
- **Work with local officials to create a more positive police presence at immigrant community events,** working with elders to provide safety for younger community members, and education campaigns and outreach.
- **Create community conversations** with teachers, Mexican consulate, local businesses, government officials, and members of local Latino organizations.
- **Develop small business incubator** to create healthy & gourmet food experience for tourists.
- Community fundraisers **raise scholarship funds for DACA-eligible children** to enroll in post-secondary educational and training opportunities.
- **Partner with colleges and universities to create career fairs and Parent College sessions.**
- **Partnerships with local police force, schools, and clinics to provide Community Clinic,** bilingual assistance for victims of domestic violence, counseling and mental health, and access to physical checkups for workers and school children in extracurricular activities.



Working with immigrants has . . .

- **Enriched the campus** by providing additional research, teaching, and service opportunities for faculty, staff, and students. Latino students appreciate what they perceive as institutional investment in them and in their communities of origin. *This is a good recruitment and retention strategy.*
- **Allowed for important and necessary community conversations** about how the region's progressive community groups and social service agencies can better work with growing Latino and Immigrant communities.
- **Developed our institutional capacity for community outreach** and to place more rural and small town Latino and Latino immigrant schoolchildren into the college pipeline.
- Allowed faculty and administrators to identify opportunities for developing new minors and certificates **to better train the workforce of tomorrow and to improve skills of current practitioners.**
- **Allowed future educators to understand the changing demographics of the region.** **Latinos** are presently **6.9%** of the population of Wisconsin, but **10%** of all children in **K-12 classrooms**. *How can we develop culturally relevant, inclusive curricula that will make these students want to continue into higher education and to join the labor force with skills and experiences that will make the state and region more competitive?*