



The exponential growth of the Latino population in the metropolitan Phoenix area is a demographic phenomenon which must be addressed in developing a compelling academic vision for the Maricopa County Community Colleges. Central to this recommendation is the inclusion of the academic perspectives of Latino faculty and staff.

AACHE is strongly opposed to the view that the Maricopa Colleges become selective institutions. Because many at-risk students come from low income households, the Maricopa Colleges should continue an open admissions policy. First generation Latino students tend to exhibit a lack of academic readiness and the requisite study skills needed to thrive, succeed, and graduate from college. In many cases, the Maricopa Colleges represents the last hope for Latinos to obtain a college education.

The Maricopa Colleges has the obligation to fully support development education in order for at-risk students to be competitive in the job market and move up to academic/transfer programs. The influx of Latino students whose primary language is Spanish necessitates the offering of ESL classes at all MCCCD colleges. Recent research strongly suggests that Latino role models have a long term salutary effect on students. In this respect, MCLI could sponsor symposia that address the learning barriers of Latinos and other underserved student populations.

AACHE supports the establishment of Chicana and Chicano studies at all ten colleges within the Maricopa Colleges. The focus of this academic program would be to build the analytical and methodological skill set within a public policy context. Presently, Arizona State University and the University of Arizona offer course work leading to degrees in Chicana and Chicano Studies. Chicana and Chicano Studies will prepare students for leadership positions within a professional setting. This academic area should be fully funded.

The Maricopa Colleges are known for outstanding academic programs, which parallel course work taught at Arizona universities. In recent years, tuition costs to attend Arizona universities continue to spiral upward. As a result obtaining a university education is becoming prohibitive for students from low-income families. The population growth of metropolitan Phoenix has placed a strain on Arizona State University. Academic planning should begin to examine how two-year colleges can be transformed into four-year baccalaureate-granting institutions.

The recruitment of Latino faculty will improve the academic quality of the Maricopa Colleges. Commissioned for thousands of dollars, the Pedrini report (February 2003) indicated that there are serious problems with the employment practices and lack of a unified recruitment plan within the Maricopa Colleges.