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Disparities in Tuition: A Study of Tuitions Assessed by Hispanic Serving Community Colleges versus Non-Hispanic Serving Community Colleges in Texas

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With the shift of higher education funding from federal and state to the local level, community colleges' choices to offset this funding deficit become few and difficult. One regrettable choice that is frequently made is to increase tuition. This choice has largest financial impact on students of lower income with many of these students coming from minority backgrounds.

Laden (2004) points out the Hispanic population is the largest minority group in the US and is expected to increase and make a significant impact on the US educational system for years to come. Latinos like the general population as a whole realize that a high school education alone no longer offers secure employment and financial security. The fact that the number of Hispanic students taking the ACT has increased 40% since 2001 indicates that a greater number of Hispanic students are considering college (Orchowski, 2005). About half of all Hispanic students attend Hispanic serving institutions and many of those are community colleges (Dervarics, 2005). This impact of the Hispanic population and the role of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) remain largely unrecognized by federal and state educational officials (Laden, 2001).

U. S. community colleges have been for years the avenue through which many Hispanic students and other minority students who are economically disadvantaged entered higher education. This has been primarily due to lower tuition and more convenient locations (Alfonso, 2006). Of U. S. Latinos enrolled in higher education, 50% attend Hispanic serving institutions (Hispanic Association of College and Universities, 2007)

Texas is second in the number of Hispanic serving institutions with 35 exceeded only by California with 66 who are followed distantly by New Mexico (18) and New York (12). In the fall of 2005, 1.19 million students enrolled in Texas institutions of higher learning. 570,180 students (48%) were enrolled in one or more of the 50 public community colleges within the state (Texas Higher Education Data, 2007). The minority population within community colleges make-up 49% of enrollment, with Hispanic enrollment being 28% of total state enrollment (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2007). This enrollment percentage still remains low and does not reflect the state's general Hispanic population of 32% (Anonymous, 2006).

Texas Hispanic students face many cultural challenges. Laden (2001) dispels many traditional myths as to why Hispanics do not pursue education and higher education in particular, but the overriding effect that the Hispanic family has in determining the children's educational success is undeniable. Most Hispanic students are the first generation to attend college. There is a tendency to have lower expectations in this culture toward advanced education. Due to the Hispanic culture of placing a priority on the family and extended family unite prospective Hispanic students wishing to continue their post high school education are often limited geographically to their choices of institutions of higher learning due to this culture priority of family. Hispanic women are especially susceptible due to this family first culture (Dayton et al. 2004). For the closest choice of institution to have higher tuition rates places yet another barrier in their educational pursuits.

Research questions

Six research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What is the extent of 1997-1998 tuition between Hispanic serving community colleges and non-Hispanic serving institutions in the state of Texas?
2. What is the extent of 2006-2006 tuition between Hispanic serving community colleges and non-Hispanic serving community colleges in the state of Texas?
3. What are the extent of change in 1997-1998 and 2006-2007 tuition between Hispanic serving community colleges and non-Hispanic serving community colleges in the state of Texas?
4. Do differences exist in 1997-1998 average tuition between Hispanic serving community colleges and non-Hispanic serving community colleges in the state of Texas?
5. Do differences exist in 2006-2007 average tuition between Hispanic serving community colleges and non-Hispanic serving colleges in the state of Texas?
6. Do significant differences exist in the rate of change in tuition between Hispanic serving community colleges and non-Hispanic serving community colleges between the academic years 1997-98 and 2006-07?

Methodology

Tuition data for Texas Hispanic serving community colleges and Texas non-Hispanic community colleges was obtained from the Texas Association of Community College's (TACC) web site. Hispanic student full-time enrollment data at Texas community colleges percentage data was obtained from the U. S. Department of Education statistical database (2007). These data are provided in the appendices. SPSS statistical software was utilized to ascertain a test of homogeneity (TABLE 1), to obtain descriptive statistics (TABLE 2), and to conduct an analysis of variance (ANOVA) (TABLE 3) on the tuition data. Findings with significance less than 0.05 were considered critical.

Findings

Research questions 1, 2, and 3 regarding the extent of tuition for Texas Hispanic serving community colleges and Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges for academic years 1997-98 and 2006-07 results were used in Table 2.

For the academic year 1997-98, the average tuition at Texas Hispanic serving community colleges was \$208, with a maximum tuition of \$295. The average Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges tuition was \$204, while the maximum tuition was \$288.

For the academic year 2006-07, the average tuition at Texas Hispanic serving community colleges was \$497, with a maximum tuition of \$725. The average Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges tuition was \$389, where as the maximum was \$672.

The tuition differential for Texas Hispanic serving community colleges for the academic years 1997-98

and 2006-07 was \$288. The tuition differential for Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges for the academic years 1997-98 and 2006-07 was \$184.

Research questions 4, 5, and 6 relating to the differences in tuitions between Texas Hispanic serving community colleges and Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges results were used in Table 3.

Statistical analysis (ANOVA) of the data show that there was no significant difference (\$3.85) between the average tuition at Texas Hispanic serving community colleges and Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges for the academic year 1997-98. The analysis of the data for the academic year 2006-07 did show there was a significant difference (\$107.83) between the average tuition at Texas Hispanic serving community colleges and Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges.

Further data analysis indicates that a significant change in tuition occurred between Texas Hispanic serving community colleges and Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges across the academic years 1999-98 and 2006-07.

Conclusions and recommendations

A statistical analysis of tuition assessed by Texas Hispanic serving community colleges versus tuition assessed by Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges reveals that there was a significant difference between tuition charged by the two types of institutions, with the Hispanic institutions being at a distinct disadvantage, and that this tuition disparity has increased substantially from the 1996-97 school year to 2006-07. There are several possible explanations for this occurrence. One being, that institutions with high minority enrollments tend to be provided with more funding from the federal and state governments to provide additional remediation programs and student support services for its minority population. These additional programs and support services require extra support personnel, supporting facilities, and operating equipment in on top of the institution's standard operating budget. Since minority serving institutions usually have larger lower income student populations, many enrolled students receive federal financial assistance in the form of grants, or some other form of financial aid, either from the federal or state governments. Federal and state grants reimburse colleges for a considerable percentage of the tuition that is assessed the students, leaving them with less tuition to pay on their own. Consequently, minority serving institutions are in a position to charge higher tuition fees since the most of the fees are paid by federal and state funds.

There is a negative impact to Texas Hispanic serving community colleges charging higher tuitions than Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges. The higher tuition charged by Texas Hispanic serving community colleges can place a financial burden on those students who do not qualify for federal financial assistance either because they are not minority students who qualify for financial aid, or they are Hispanic students who do not meet the financial requirements to receive federal or state financial assistance.

One possible recommendation to the disparities in tuition charged between Hispanic serving community colleges and non-Hispanic serving community colleges is that all Texas community colleges, whether designated as Hispanic serving institutions or not, charge the same tuition statewide. To overcome possible undo tax burdens that could be placed on income poor community college taxing districts, the state could supplement the deficit encountered by these community college taxing districts.

Another recommendation is that Texas community colleges require that all students meet certain academic proficiency requirements prior to enrollment. This way, community colleges will not have the additional burden of providing excessive remediation programs for entering students. High schools will have to make certain that students who graduate are prepared to enter post-secondary education institutions with the requisite requirements set by community colleges and universities.

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Table 1

Test of Homogeneity of Variances for 1997-98 and 2006-07 tuitions for Texas Hispanic serving community colleges and Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Tuition 2006/07	1.396	1	48	.243
Tuition 1997/98	.193	1	48	.663
Change	1.473	1	48	.231

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for 1997-98 and 2006-07 tuition for Texas Hispanic serving community colleges and Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Tuition 2006/07	Hispanic Serving Institution	13	496.69	137.097	300	725
	Non-Hispanic Serving Institution	37	388.86	107.162	144	672
	Total	50	416.90	123.785	144	725
Tuition 1997/98	Hispanic Serving Institution	13	208.31	42.966	132	295
	Non-Hispanic Serving Institution	37	204.46	40.694	96	288
	Total	50	205.46	40.886	96	295
Change	Hispanic Serving Institution	13	288.38	117.000	120	521

	Non-Hispanic Serving Institution	37	184.41	93.311	0	432
	Total	50	211.44	108.959	0	521

Table 3

ANOVA for 1997-98 and 2006-07 tuition between Texas Hispanic serving community colleges and Texas non-Hispanic serving community colleges

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tuition 2006/07	Between Groups	111849.406	1	111849.406	8.402	.006
	Within Groups	638959.094	48	13311.648		
	Total	750808.500	49			
Tuition 1997/98	Between Groups	142.462	1	142.462	.084	.774
	Within Groups	81769.958	48	1703.541		
	Total	81912.420	49			
Change	Between Groups	104008.324	1	104008.324	10.450	.002
	Within Groups	477719.996	48	9952.500		
	Total	581728.320	49			

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Appendix A

Community College (HSI)	Tuition 06/07	Tuition 97/98	Change
Alamo	504	228	276
Coast Bend College	725	204	521
Del Mar College	408	216	192
El Paso community College	602	295	307
Houston Community College	300	132	168
Howard County Junior College	606	216	390
Laredo Community College	420	204	216
Midland College	516	204	312
Odessa College	504	168	336
South Plains College	312	192	120
South Texas College	708	277	431
Southwest Texas Junior College	492	168	324
Victoria College	360	204	156
Community College (NHSI)			
Alvin	336	180	156
Amarillo	384	180	204

Angelina	360	180	180
Austin	468	288	180
Blinn	420	216	204
Brazosport	336	193	143
Central Texas	384	240	144
Cisco	324	240	84
Clarendon	456	192	264
College of the Mainland	348	168	180
Collin	324	192	132
Dallas	468	212	256
Frank Phillips	360	192	168
Galveston	360	96	264
Grayson	396	252	144
Hill	480	180	300
Kilgore	240	168	72
Lee	300	168	132
McLennan	672	240	432
Navarro	360	216	144
North Central Texas	408	216	192

North Harris Montgomery	432	264	168
Northeast Texas	336	180	156
Panola	252	216	36
Paris	420	264	156
Ranger	444	228	216
San Jacinto	360	192	168
Tarrant	600	264	336
Temple	540	192	348
Texarkana	144	144	0
Texas Southmost	372	260	112
Trinity Valley	240	144	96
Tyler	240	180	60
Vernon	384	204	180
Weatherford	624	228	396
Western Texas	432	240	192
Wharton	384	156	228

Appendix B

Hispanic Serving Institutions

**Percent undergraduate FTE
Hispanic**

Coastal Bend College	63.36
Del Mar College	55.95
El Centro College, Dallas	25.76
El Paso Community College, El Paso	85.70
Houston Community College System	25.92
Howard County Junior College District	31.21
Laredo Community College	94.72
Midland College	25.79
Mountain View College, Dallas	41.86
Northwest Vista College, Alamo	44.02
Odessa College	42.25
Palo Alto College, Alamo	64.24
San Antonio College, Alamo	47.21
San Jacinto College-Central Campus	28.51
South Plains College	27.13
South Texas College	95.32
Southwest Texas Junior College	81.96
St Philips College, Alamo	48.85
Victoria College	32.03

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