Identify perceived barriers and supports influencing college success and completion for first-generation Hispanic students of desert southwest: Making bachelor’s degree completion the obvious and attainable next step for more Yuma & Imperial County students

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Introduction

- Latinos are the largest and fastest growing racial group in the United States, they remain the “least well-educated” population (Villalpando, 2004).
- Arizona Western College reports that one out of two first-time, degree-seeking Yuma County students have left college without a degree at the end of year one.
- There is a low number of people in Yuma County that have completed a four-year degree or higher (17% Yuma vs. 27% Arizona) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).
- In order to raise bachelor’s degree attainment in Yuma County first generation Hispanic students, it is important to address, identify, and understand student's personal perceptions of barriers that influence bachelor’s degree attainment.
- It is also important to understand how these perceptions might be related to cultural experiences and family.

Methods

The purpose of the study is to identify perceived barriers and supports that influence college success and completion for Yuma County first generation Hispanic students.

1. What are individual perceptions of barriers to post-secondary success in first generation Hispanic students Yuma County, AZ?
2. How do first generation mentorship experiences impact perceive barriers and challenges influencing success or failure in college, retention and completion of bachelor’s degrees?
3. How does an educational mentorship enrichment program for first generation Hispanic students affect how students perceive barriers to post-secondary success?

Results

Top 10 Identified Barriers and Supports Based on Pilot Test 1 & 2

1. Self-efficacy of the student. Perception of self and his ability to attend and complete college.
2. Money availability to pay for cost of college.
3. Knowledge of available jobs in region and requirements for employment.
4. Career Counseling both in course work and majors that are required. Career counseling is to better understand what that career entails and involves mentorship of industry professions.
5. Lack of Parent Support
6. Understanding the long term advantages of staying in school and completing a bachelor’s degree.
7. Lack of information regarding college, processes, systems and vocabulary.
8. Need mentors that have completed their bachelor’s degree or current college students to share their own personal experiences and guide students in their college going process.
9. Understanding time management and juggling of work and family responsibilities.
10. Value of work-use the student's work ethics to focus on college completion verses working and then dropping out of school.

• These factors were identified in the coding themes; Access, Capital, Behavior, Cultural, Information/Process