



Educating Minnesota's Immigrant Students

PHASE II: SOLUTIONS

Report of the Immigration and
Higher Education Study Committee,
a joint project of the Citizens League and the
MACC Alliance of Connected Communities.

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Introduction

This report represents the work of the two phases of the Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education. The first phase was charged with gathering the facts about immigrant students in Minnesota and identifying critical choices and public policy challenges that Minnesota will face in the coming years. The charge of the second phase was to develop proposals to answer the key questions identified by the first.

This study was a partnership between the [Citizens League](#) and the [MACC Alliance of Connected Communities](#), in collaboration with [Marnita's Table](#). The partnership ensured that the project involved a wide variety of stakeholders, including teachers, higher education administrators, business leaders, representatives of community organizations, immigrant students and families, and other interested citizens.

For more information about these organizations and the work of the study committee, please see pages [35-39](#).

A NOTE ON SCOPE

The four questions addressed in the report reflect four challenges that many immigrant students face as they make their way toward higher education: **information, culture, cost, and language preparation.**

Significant disparities exist within each of these areas—not just for immigrant students, but also for most low-income and first-generation students and students of color. We chose to focus on immigrant students for two related reasons:

Who is an “immigrant student?”

Throughout this report, we use “immigrant student” to refer to both first- and second-generation immigrant students. To put it another way, our definition of immigrant students includes any student who comes from an immigrant family, or any student whose parents are foreign-born, whether the student was born abroad or in the United States.

There is no typical immigrant student in Minnesota; immigrants in Minnesota come from all around the world and from all kinds of family backgrounds. (One hundred and fifty languages and dialects are spoken by students in the Minneapolis Public schools alone.)

Who is a “citizen?”

The word “citizen” in “Citizens League” refers to a democratic, rather than legal, definition of citizenship. A citizen, in this case, is an obligated, governing member of a community—whether that community is a team of co-workers, a congregation or a state. Under this definition, you are a citizen of the neighborhood, city, and state in which you reside regardless of your legal citizenship status.

What is “higher education?”

In this report, as in other recent Citizens League studies on education, we define higher education as including two- and four-year liberal arts and technical colleges and universities. Higher education refers to all post-secondary education.

- 1) As noted in this report, **little is known about Minnesota's immigrant population**—and as a result, little attention is paid to whether these students are succeeding. As the saying goes, “you don't count if you're not counted.”
- 2) **Immigrant students have been at the center of a political firestorm.** Immigration has emerged as one of the most polarizing issues of recent years, but the debate about immigrant students has centered almost exclusively on legislation that would allow undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities. This narrow

focus has made it difficult to talk about the larger policy implications of a student body that is increasingly international.

All students, not just immigrants, face challenges in the four areas we have outlined here. The Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education could have written a report on fundamental reforms to Minnesota's K-12 and higher education systems that would have increased access to higher education for all students—including immigrants.

Instead, we have chosen to focus on recommendations that are targeted

to immigrant students. Several recent Citizens League reports address broader education reforms, including *A New Vision for Saint Paul Schools* (2005; K-12 reform) and *Trouble on the Horizon* (2004; higher education reform).

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Because political and economic circumstances change rapidly—and because changes in immigration policy at the federal level would have a significant effect on

immigrant students in Minnesota—these recommendations are deliberately less specific than might be expected. The details of the recommendations are left open-ended, so that the recommendations remain flexible enough to be applied in various situations and as the policy environment changes. The way to advance these recommendations, too, is left open to adapt to circumstance; advancing the recommendations will require

a restructuring of the way that current resources are used, and, at times, additional funding and other resources. It is our hope that the recommendations will serve as guideline in developing specific strategies.

Executive Summary

Minnesota has long been recognized for its well educated, high quality workforce, but current trends threaten that reputation. Minnesota’s workforce, relative to the size of its population, is shrinking, and not enough Minnesota students are graduating from higher education. To maintain its strength in the U.S. and world economy, Minnesota needs more of its students to complete some form of higher education.

Data shows that while Minnesota’s need for skilled workers is increasing, the number of Minnesotans prepared to fill those job openings is decreasing. If current trends continue, Minnesota will soon have too few qualified workers to fill job openings. **In order to meet the coming economic demand, Minnesota must ensure that more students complete higher education and are prepared to participate in the workforce.**

IMMIGRANT STUDENTS ARE AN INTEGRAL AND GROWING PART OF MINNESOTA’S HUMAN RESOURCES.

While the number of high school graduates is projected to decline in coming years, the number of students of color graduating from high school—and immigrant students in particular—is increasing.

Data on the academic success of Minnesota’s immigrant students is not available, but students of color in general are statistically less likely to graduate from college than their white peers. Historically lower college-going rates by students of color is projected to contribute to a decline in bachelor’s degrees awarded in Minnesota.

MINNESOTA MUST ENSURE THAT MORE IMMIGRANT STUDENTS COMPLETE HIGHER EDUCATION AND ARE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKFORCE.

Beyond these economic arguments, the moral imperative for improving the education of immigrant students is also compelling. Public schools have always served as an introduction to American culture and citizenship for new immigrants, and one of the fundamental roles of public education is to develop the capacity of citizens to self-govern and participate in our workforce and our democracy. We have the obligation to ensure that our schools are prepared to serve all students.

THE KEY QUESTION: HOW CAN MINNESOTA INCREASE IMMIGRANT STUDENT READINESS AND SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

The Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education identified policy questions in four areas that are key to addressing this question.

I. INFORMATION: How are information and services about K-12 and higher education best delivered to immigrant students and their families?

Immigrant families do not communicate and engage with schools in the same ways as native-born families. In many cases, immigrants have grown up in a culture where they are expected to defer educational authority to teachers and school systems. Therefore, in some cases, community-based organizations or places of worship are a more consistent

mechanism for communicating with immigrant families than are schools themselves. Rather than just investing more in school-based systems of communication, Minnesota should also explore opportunities to partner with outside organizations and develop new systems for delivering educational information and services to immigrant families.

Conclusion 1: Minnesota should evaluate and explore both the school- and community-based efforts to deliver information and services to immigrant families and students.

Recommendation 1.1: Develop a statewide online “higher education platform” that all students are required to complete before graduating from high school.

Recommendation 1.2: Increase and improve the mentoring and advising available to immigrant students by tapping into nontraditional but trusted community resources.

- a. Encourage colleges and universities to create programs through which immigrant college students serve immigrant high school students in accessing higher education.
- b. Encourage immigrant college and university students to mentor and advise immigrant high school students, including by participating in programs such as those described above.
- c. Create a network of mentors and advisors who assist immigrant students in navigating the college process.
- d. Create a new position within school districts that is responsible for coordinating resources available to immigrant students.

II. CULTURE: How can educational institutions and individual educators learn to adapt to the changing cultural makeup of their student populations?

The increase in the number of immigrant students has introduced school districts and individual teachers to new challenges. Even with the best of intentions, it is difficult for teachers and other school

- b. Add content to current urban education programs to prepare new teachers to serve immigrant students.
- c. Create new centers for excellence in teaching and advising immigrant students.

Recommendation 2.2: Increase opportunities for immigrants to become teachers, counselors and school administrators, especially through nontraditional avenues.

Much of this conflict would be avoidable if Minnesota's immigrant communities and educational systems had better avenues for understanding each other.

staff to become familiar with all the languages, cultural backgrounds, and experiences that their immigrant students bring with them to the classroom. This lack of familiarity can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts between schools, teachers, students, and parents, but much of this conflict would be avoidable if Minnesota's immigrant communities and educational systems had better avenues for understanding each other.

Conclusion 2: Minnesota's systems of education need to improve their capacity to adapt to the changing cultural makeup of their student populations.

Recommendation 2.1: Create new mechanisms to prepare teachers, advisors, and school administrators to effectively educate immigrant students.

- a. Require continuing education on multicultural issues for all teachers, guidance counselors, and school administrators.

III. COST: What do immigrant families need to overcome the financial challenges related to higher education?

Most of the barriers related to the cost of higher education actually come down to factors that fall under the other categories. Some students, for example, don't understand the financial aid application process, so they do not receive all the scholarships for which they might be eligible. Others may have finished high school unprepared for college-level course work and must use their aid and their savings for higher education to pay for remedial classes.

The most significant area where cost issues alone are a factor relates to students who do not qualify for scholarships, financial aid and/or in-state tuition. This may be because students did not enter higher education directly after graduating from high school, because they attend part time, or because of their immigration status.

Conclusion 3: Minnesota should be at the forefront of exploring and developing mechanisms that allow immigrant students to finance higher education in ways that are consistent with their culture, family obligations, and immigration status.

Recommendation 3.1: Equalize eligibility of part-time and older students for scholarships and grants.

Recommendation 3.2: Pass state legislation that would allow all students who meet residency requirements to attend public colleges and universities at the in-state tuition rate, regardless of immigration status.

Recommendation 3.3: Make state higher education aid available to all students who meet residency requirements, regardless of immigration status.

Recommendation 3.4: Develop a standardized financial aid application that can be used to obtain state financial aid and institution-specific scholarships.

IV. LANGUAGE PREPARATION: What is the best way to prepare immigrant students for college-level English skills?

Learning English has always been a challenge for new immigrants. Today's students face an even greater challenge than earlier generations of immigrants. To be successful in Minnesota's information economy they must be proficient in rigorous academic English—something that was rarely expected of earlier immigrants. The English Language Learner (ELL) systems in Minnesota too often do not adequately prepare students for higher education or professional careers.

Conclusion 4: The ultimate goal must be a system that prepares immigrant students not just for basic proficiency in English but for the college-level English skills required for success in higher education.

Recommendation 4.1: Provide additional support to students identified as English Language

Learners in the form of longer school days, a longer school year, or programs outside of school.

- a. Develop a standardized process for use by all Minnesota school districts to identify and assess English Language Learners.
- b. Identify and expand best practices to deliver high-quality English instruction to English Language Learners at all levels.

- c. Set aggressive goals for individual English Language Learner student progress and proficiency.



Photo by Laura Golubeva, courtesy of *Admission Possible*

General Findings

As Minnesota's immigrant population has increased over the last three decades, our institutions of education have wrestled with questions of how to integrate immigrant students into our schools—and whether our schools are up to the task. There is little consensus over how best to educate immigrant students, and little information is available to show us where or whether we have been successful.

This much is clear: both moral and economic imperatives demand that immigrant students (and *all* students) are ready for and successful in higher education.

The moral argument is compelling: public schools have always served as an introduction to American culture and citizenship for new immigrants—and one of the fundamental roles of public education is to develop the capacity of citizens to self-govern and participate in our democracy. In addition, we have a particular responsibility to refugees, who make up a significant proportion of Minnesota's immigrant population, and who are often sent to resettle in Minnesota with little to say in the matter.

The economic stakes are equally clear. The coming retirement of the baby boom generation and unprecedented competition from the global economy add to those demands: to maintain our standard of living, Minnesota needs more citizens to complete higher education.

Recent work by the Minnesota Private College Council puts the discrepancy between the number of workers Minnesota's economy will need and the number of graduates Minnesota schools are producing in bold relief:

- Between 2003 and 2013, the number of high school graduates in Minnesota will decrease by 10.3 percent.
- Between 2007 and 2017, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in Minnesota each year will decline by 12 percent – that adds up to 3,000 fewer college graduates per year.
- Over roughly the same period, the number of college graduates retiring from the Minnesota workforce will grow from 9,000 to 25,000 each year.
- On top of the need created by retirements, new job growth in professional and high tech industries will demand an additional 10,500 college graduates each year.

Source: Minnesota Private College Council, "Demographic Challenges and Opportunities: Higher Education & Minnesota's Future," April 2006

GENERAL FINDING 1: MINNESOTA NEEDS MORE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO COMPLETE SOME FORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AND IMMIGRANT STUDENTS ARE KEY.

Minnesota is at a critical juncture in its economic and social future. The global information economy demands a highly educated, highly skilled workforce, but Minnesota's capacity to meet that need is shrinking. At the same time as our Baby Boomers will begin to retire, the numbers of students graduating from high school and receiving bachelor's degrees in Minnesota will decline.

In 2011, the baby boom generation will start to turn 65. Over roughly the same period, the number of college graduates retiring from the Minnesota workforce will grow from 9,000 to 25,000 each year, and by

2020, Minnesota will have more retirees than schoolchildren for the first time in its history.¹

This demographic shift will have profound implications for Minnesota's economy: we will be depending on a smaller pool of workers to support a growing pool of retirees, who will be living longer lives than any previous generation.

The number of jobs in Minnesota requiring some higher education and providing a living wage will grow by 21 percent from 2002 to 2012, while jobs requiring only a high school education will grow by 12 percent.² Nine of the ten fastest growing jobs in the next decade will require some form of higher education.³

At the same time, the number of high school graduates and the number of bachelor's degrees awarded each year

will decline. Between 2003 and 2013, the number of high school graduates in Minnesota will decrease by 10.3 percent—significantly more than the national average of 4 percent.⁴

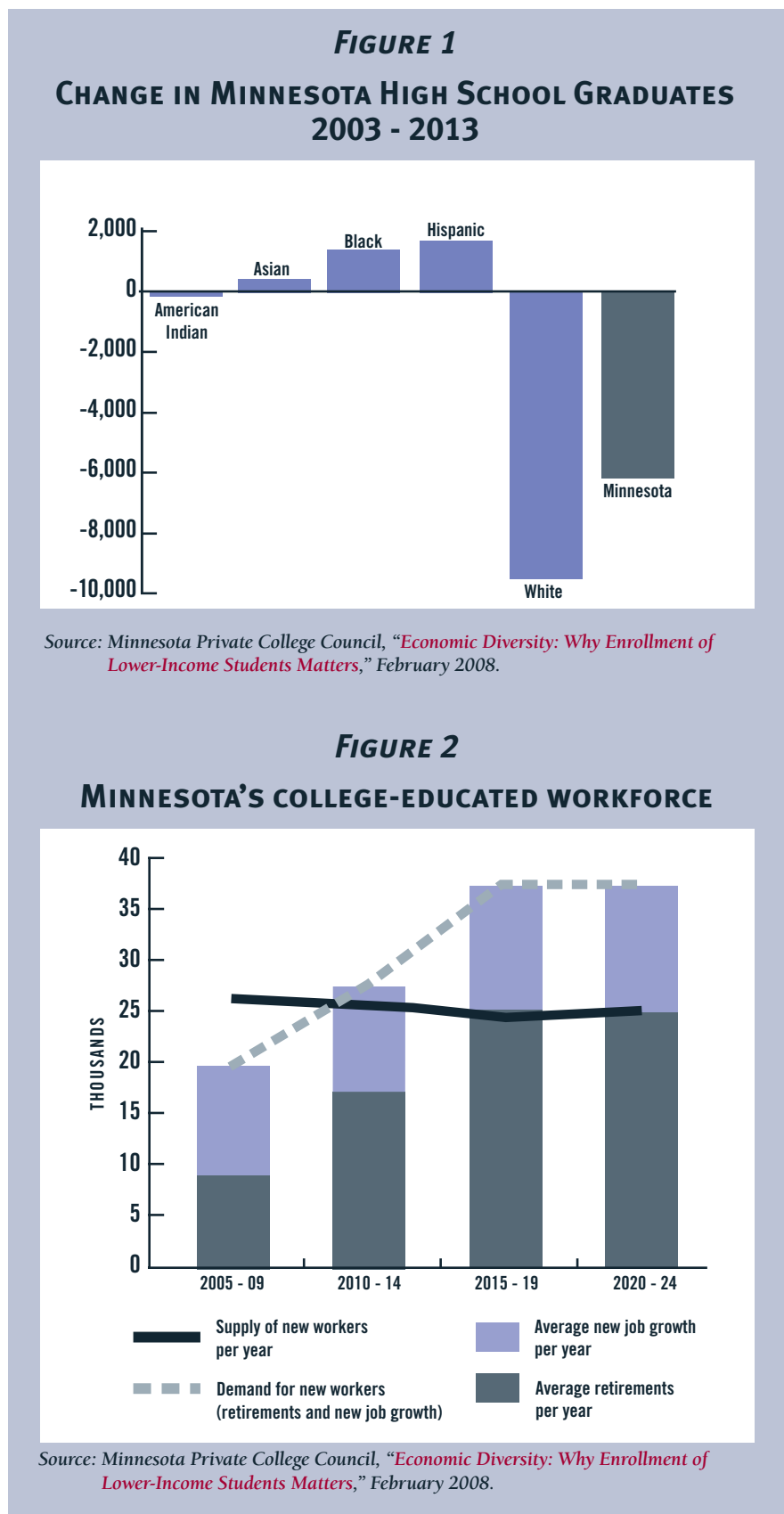
While the number of high school graduates in Minnesota is projected to decline in coming years, the number of students of color graduating from high school is increasing. Hispanic graduates alone are projected to increase by 173 percent between 2003 and 2013 (Figure 1).⁵

Because immigrant students are not tracked statewide, we cannot say for certain that the number of students from immigrant families will increase, but the increasing number of immigrants in Minnesota of child-bearing age strongly suggests that it will.

Since 1970, the number and proportion of immigrants living in Minnesota has increased rapidly (Figures 3, 4). By 2004, there were approximately 304,000 immigrants living in Minnesota, making up 6.1 percent of the state’s population.⁶ In some Minnesota communities, that number is much higher: immigrants make up approximately 15 percent of the populations of both Minneapolis and St. Paul and almost 20 percent of the population of some Twin Cities suburbs and Greater Minnesota cities.

Most school districts, colleges and universities in Minnesota do not track the immigration status of students and their families. As a result, little data is available to answer the most basic questions about the academic success of immigrant students.

Students of color generally, however, are statistically less likely to graduate from college than their white peers. Historically lower college-going rates

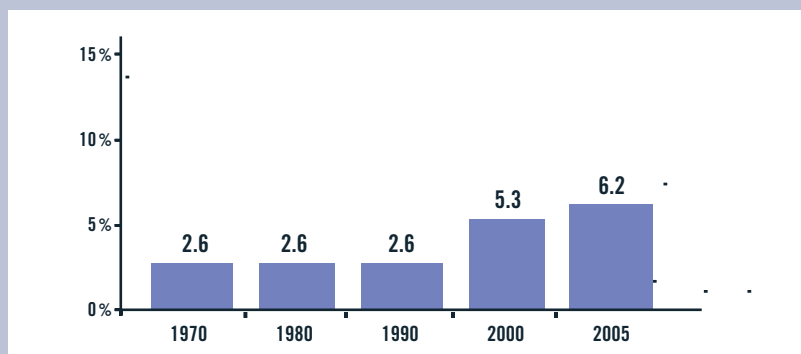


by students of color will contribute to the decline in bachelor’s degrees awarded in Minnesota. The Minnesota Private College Council

predicts that, between 2007 and 2017, the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded in Minnesota will decrease by 12 percent.⁷

FIGURE 3

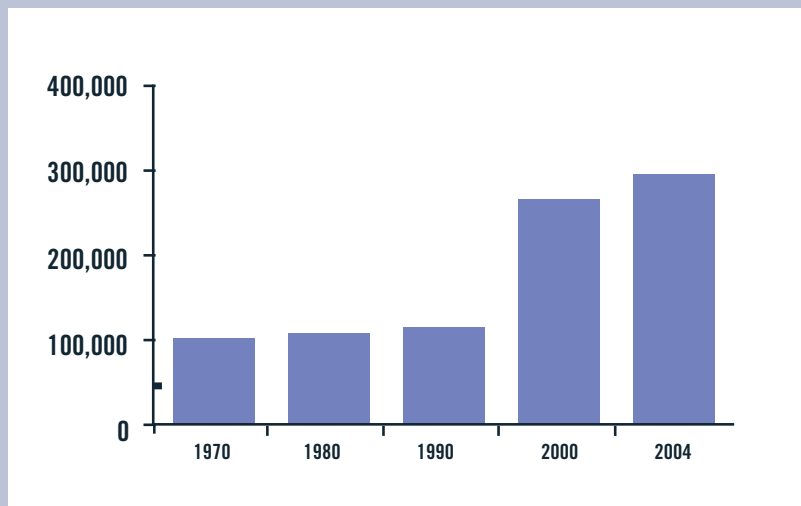
PERCENT OF MINNESOTA'S POPULATION BORN IN ANOTHER COUNTRY



Data: Census, 2005 ACS. Analysis: Minnesota State Demographer

FIGURE 4

SIZE OF MINNESOTA'S POPULATION BORN IN ANOTHER COUNTRY



Data: Census, 2004 ACS. Analysis: Minnesota State Demographer

If current trends continue, Minnesota will soon have too few qualified workers to fill job openings created by retirements and economic expansion. **In order to meet the coming economic demand, Minnesota must ensure that more students of color in general—and immigrant students in particular—complete higher education that prepares them to participate in the workforce.**

Furthermore, studies show that over the long-term, **immigrants generate more tax revenues than the costs of the public services they use** (in other words, immigrants have a positive fiscal impact), at least at the national level. This impact is powerfully influenced by education level. According to one estimate, for example, an immigrant with less than a high school education will have a negative fiscal impact of \$13,000 over

their lifetime, whereas an immigrant with more than a high school education will have a positive fiscal impact of \$198,000.⁸

**GENERAL FINDING 2:
DATA ABOUT IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN MINNESOTA IS LIMITED**

It is difficult to tell how successful Minnesota's immigrant students are in our school and in higher education. Each school district in Minnesota collects different information about its students—and most do not track the immigration status of students and their families. As a result, few data are available to answer the most basic questions about the number and academic performance of immigrant students in Minnesota schools.

Similarly, most colleges and universities in Minnesota do not track students by immigration status or ethnicity. Not only might it be costly to collect such information, but most colleges and universities, both public and private, depend on government appropriations for much of their financing. The current political debate over immigration and terrorism may put many of these institutions in the uncomfortable position of sharing student data to help enforce immigration law, which acts as a disincentive to collect sensitive student data at all.

The U.S. Census tells us that in 2000, there were approximately 96,000 children of immigrants in Minnesota schools.⁹ However, there is disagreement among immigrant communities and communities of color regarding the validity of this estimate.

Minnesota's public schools do track whether students are "English Language Learners" (ELL), and the

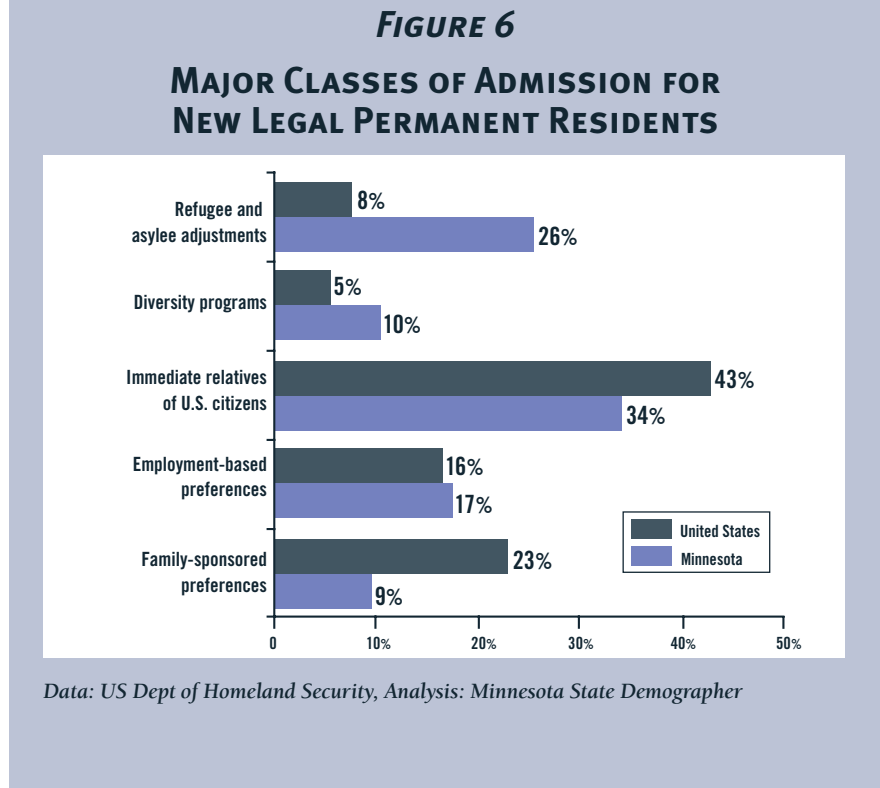
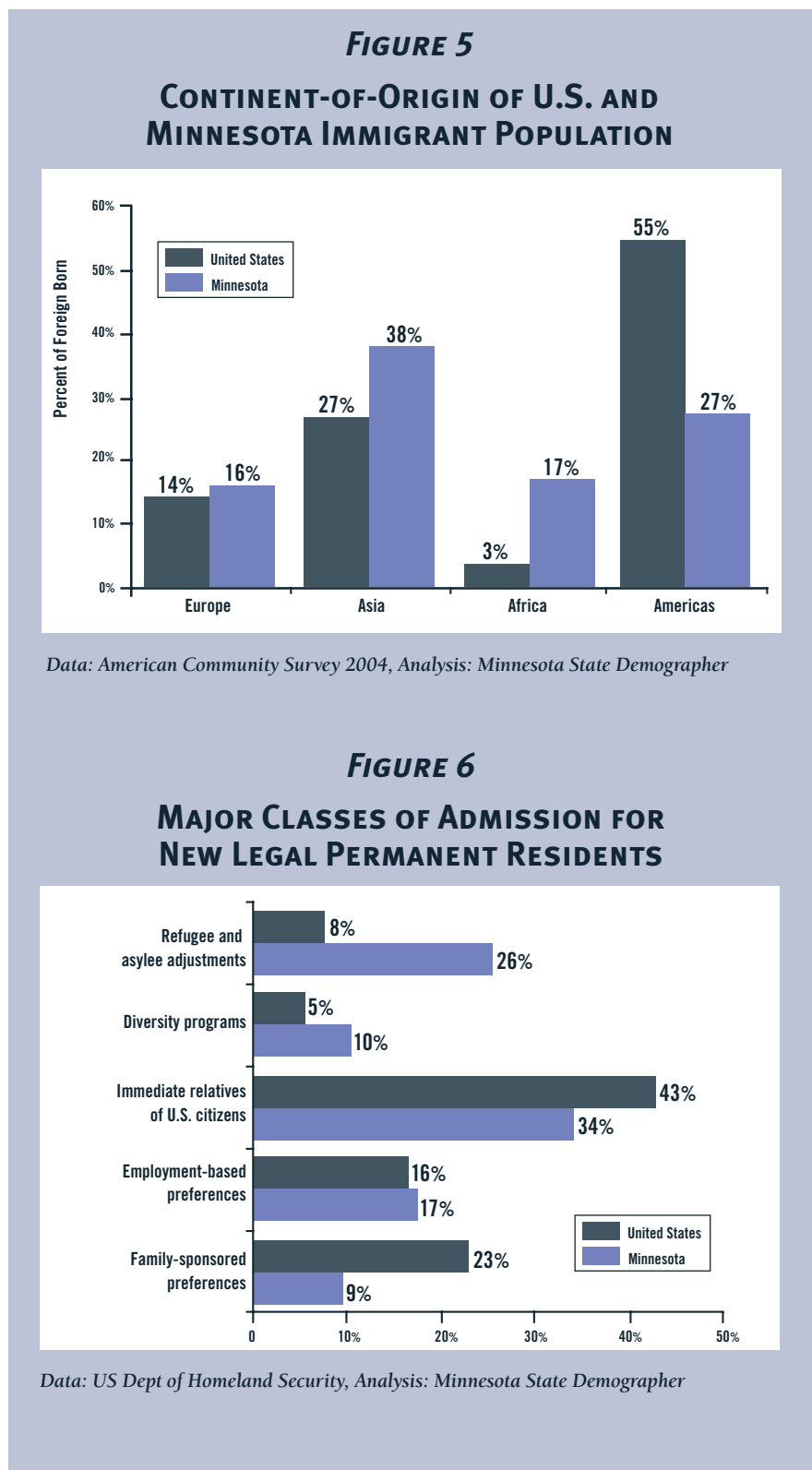
ELL designation is commonly used as a proxy for immigrant students. Approximately seven percent of Minnesota public school students are English Language Learners (57,665 students total).¹⁰

Unfortunately, ELL is an imperfect proxy for “immigrant.” According to the [National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction](#), just over half of ELL students in U.S. schools are foreign-born.¹¹ At the same time, an Urban Institute analysis of Census data shows that only 40 percent of foreign-born students are ELL.¹² This means that when we use ELL as a proxy for “immigrant,” we include a significant number of students who are not foreign-born but who—for any number of reasons, including speaking indigenous American languages—are receiving English language instruction in schools, and we exclude a significant number of students who are foreign-born but who are proficient in English.

GENERAL FINDING 3: MINNESOTA’S IMMIGRANT POPULATION DIFFERS FROM THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

In addition, it is not accurate to extrapolate findings about immigrant students in Minnesota from national data.

Minnesota’s immigrant population differs significantly from the rest of the country. Compared to the United States overall, Minnesota has a substantially higher proportion of immigrants from Africa and Asia, a comparatively smaller proportion of immigrants from the Americas (Figure 5), and a substantially higher proportion of refugees (Figure 6). In fact, Minnesota has the highest proportion of refugees of any state.¹³



Immigration to Minnesota is also changing. According to the 2000 census, the largest immigrant groups in Minnesota come from Mexico (41,592), Laos (25,968), Vietnam (15,727), Canada (13,183) and China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan,

10,003).¹⁴ However, recent trends in immigration show a different story. In 2004, the top five sources of immigration to Minnesota were Somalia, Ethiopia, India, Mexico and the Philippines.¹⁵

While studies from other states suggest that, on the whole, immigrant students are relatively successful in K-12 education,¹⁶ the results of these studies cannot be extrapolated to Minnesota. Minnesota's immigrant population differs significantly from that of the rest of the country; we cannot say whether our immigrant students are likely to be more, less or equally successful as immigrant students in other states.

**GENERAL FINDING 4:
IMMIGRANT STUDENTS
BRING IMPORTANT ASSETS TO
MINNESOTA.**

The coming demographic and economic changes necessitate that Minnesota take advantage of all of its human resources, but immigrant students have special assets that merit particular attention in our increasingly global economy. Many immigrant students speak multiple languages and have international perspectives, experience and connections. These assets are too often treated as problems that our educational systems need to work around, rather than as resources that can improve learning for all students.

**THE KEY QUESTION:
HOW CAN MINNESOTA
INCREASE IMMIGRANT STUDENT
READINESS FOR AND SUCCESS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION?**

The Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education developed recommendations to address key policy questions in four areas—information, culture, cost and language preparation—that we believe will help to increase the number of immigrant students in Minnesota who go on to higher education.

The current political conversation about immigrant students has focused almost entirely on



Photo courtesy of Quito Ziegler/Minnesota Immigrant Freedom Network

undocumented students and the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (for more information on the DREAM Act, see page 21). Undocumented students, however, are only one portion of Minnesota's immigrant student body. To increase participation and success of immigrant students in higher education, Minnesota must broaden this conversation to include other policy challenges and other voices.

The discussion must be expanded to include all immigrant students, and the responsibility for addressing the policy challenges raised in this report should not be held exclusively by government but also by the other institutions that serve immigrant families and communities.

Photo courtesy of Quito Ziegler/Minnesota Immigrant Freedom Network



Principles

As a guide in drafting its recommendations, the Study Committee developed the following principles. With the principles, the Committee intends to draw its vision for immigrant students and higher education. The goals expressed in these principles may be unattainable, but they form the direction in which the following recommendations are aimed.

The fundamental principle that forms the foundation of this report is that **higher education should be encouraged, and it should be a realistic opportunity, for all immigrant students.**

The principle is hard to disagree with but, when taken seriously, has profound consequences. To make higher education a realistic opportunity for all immigrant students, we must address the challenges raised in this report.

PRINCIPLE 1:
All students should be able to afford higher education.

Because families differ in their ability to afford higher education, a variety of mechanisms should be available to ensure that all students can finance their education.

PRINCIPLE 2:
High school should adequately prepare all graduates for higher education, so that they are not inhibited by the cost of remedial education.

Students should not have to spend time and money on remedial classes at a college or university to make up for what they should have learned in the K-12 system.

PRINCIPLE 3:
Higher education application and financial aid processes should be easy to navigate.

Applications for admissions, financial aid and scholarships should be understandable to high school students. These processes should be evaluated and simplified if possible.

PRINCIPLE 4:
Higher education pathways and funding options should be flexible, to allow students to work and fulfill family obligations while attending school.

Students often have obligations outside of their education. Rather than turning those obligations into barriers, higher education should be flexible.

PRINCIPLE 5:
Students should receive individual attention from knowledgeable advisors, mentors or counselors.

Inside and outside of school, immigrant students need advisors, mentors and counselors who are knowledgeable about higher education and about students' cultures.

PRINCIPLE 6:
K-12 students should not be held back in other subjects because their English skills are temporarily limited.

Students who need English language instruction should not have to sacrifice instruction in other subject areas.

PRINCIPLE 7:
Schools must understand the interplay between the cultures of their students, the school, and education in the United States. They must be able to find the means to effectively communicate with students and their families.

Immigrant students need help navigating the differences between their home culture and the culture of education in the United States.

PRINCIPLE 8:
Education is a shared responsibility among schools, students, families and communities.

Schools are not single-handedly responsible for educating students. Students and families must prioritize education, and communities should provide support to help ensure students' success.

PRINCIPLE 9:
Educational leadership in immigrant communities is crucial to immigrant students' success.

To create a lasting increase in the number of immigrant students who complete higher education, immigrant communities must develop internal educational leadership: college graduates, teachers, and other educators who serve as role models and mentors to students.

I. Information

HOW ARE INFORMATION AND SERVICES ABOUT K-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION BEST DELIVERED TO IMMIGRANT STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES?

Felipe is nineteen years old. He was born in the United States; his parents were immigrants from Mexico. In high school, Felipe was an excellent student—he took Advanced Placement classes and won a track-and-field scholarship to Texas A&M University. He turned down the scholarship. “I wanted to learn about my parents’ life,” he said, so he took a job in a factory. When his family moved to Minnesota, he knew he wanted to go to college, but he didn’t know where to start. “I didn’t know what colleges there were here, what kinds of colleges or how I could find them.”

Norma and Albina are mothers and advocates in their children’s schools. They work hard to make sure that Latino families and students are included in school activities. Even for these active parents, though, it is difficult to stay on top of what they need to do. “There should be more information in other languages, not just English. The kids have to be the translators for the parents, so not all the information gets home,” Norma said. “They are supposed to have a translator but they don’t always.” Albina was hired by the school to talk to teachers about Latino culture. “There should be more outreach,” she said, “they shouldn’t just wait for a call.”

FINDINGS

All students and families need information and support as they navigate Minnesota’s educational systems, and immigrant families would benefit from support targeted

to their specific needs. In general, immigrant students are unlikely to be familiar with Minnesota’s educational systems, postsecondary options, career planning and the higher education admission process. In addition, immigrant families usually do not have the same “insider information”—what kinds

of extracurricular activities impress college admissions officers, how local colleges differ from each other—that helps students prepare for and succeed in higher education.

There are a multitude of resources available to provide information and support to immigrant families within the public school system, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, community associations and informal networks. However, no system exists to coordinate these resources; as a result they can be difficult for students to access—and it is difficult to tell what programs and resources are most effective.

SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELORS MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST ANSWER

In the past, school-based counselors were the bridge between students and the multitudes of programs, systems, institutions and resources that were available to them. Today,

counselors are overwhelmed by the number of students they must support and cannot always give individual students the personal attention they need. **Minnesota public schools have, on average, one counselor for everyone 792 students**—almost eight times the 1:100 ratio recommended by the

No system exists to coordinate these resources; as a result they can be difficult for students to access—and it is difficult to tell what programs and resources are most effective.

National Association of College Admission Counselors for college and academic counseling. Minnesota is ranked 49th in the country for its student-to-counselor ratio; only California has fewer counselors per student.¹⁷

Minnesota’s low counselor-to-student ratio means that students get little individual support from their counselors. The students who participated in our focus groups told us that their counselors were too busy to offer much help. Students who know what they are looking for can get the information they need from counselors, but students who need additional support often have a hard time finding it at school.

This problem is compounded by the fact that counselors and college admissions officers do not always have accurate information. For example, students and parents told stories of counselors who told them that because they were undocumented they could not

attend college (they can). In many Minnesota communities, the influx of immigrants is relatively recent, and the staff and faculty of schools are still learning about the special challenges that immigrant students face.

OUTSIDE RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE BUT UNCOORDINATED

Many immigrant families, particularly refugees, have strong relationships with local community organizations and mutual assistance associations. Many students told us that they turned to those organizations first for information, support and resources to help with their education. Unfortunately, while some students have access to programs or individuals that can help them be successful in school, many students do not—and little is known about the quality and effectiveness of the programs themselves.

CONCLUSION 1: Minnesota should evaluate and explore both school- and community-based efforts to deliver information and services to immigrant families and students.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1: Develop a statewide online “higher education platform” that all students are required to complete before graduating from high school.

Students should be required to complete a “higher education plan” in which they detail what they hope to do after high school graduation, compile the materials necessary for college and scholarship applications and outline a strategy to achieve their goals. Requiring such planning will ensure that all Minnesota students are encouraged to attend higher education and that they will receive some support in preparing for it.

A standardized online platform for students’ higher education plans

should be developed for use in all Minnesota high schools. The platform should help students identify their post-high school goals as well as the decisions they need to make and actions they need to take to achieve those goals. In addition, the platform should:

- Provide access to high school transcripts and standardized test scores, including the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments and common college entrance exams like the SAT and ACT.
- Allow students to create a portfolio of their best work, to be used in college and scholarship applications.

- Automate the application process to public and private colleges and universities in Minnesota, using students’ transcripts, test scores and portfolios.
- Link students to a database of available scholarships and college access programming in Minnesota.
- Link students to online advisors and mentors, including those provided by the state Department of Education, school districts, nonprofit and community organizations and individual volunteers.
- Guide students on preparation necessary for a variety of professions.

TAKE NOTE: EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Parent Involvement Training Classes

Parent Institute for Quality Education, California

The Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) runs nine-week training classes for parents, particularly those who did not attend college themselves, to learn how to help their children succeed in school and prepare for higher education. While not restricted to immigrant families, the curriculum directly addresses some of the challenges they face.

The program is offered at no charge to parents and is offered in a flexible schedule to adjust to parents’ work schedules. Over the course of nine weeks, parents learn skills and knowledge including:

- How the U.S. school system works, expectations for students, and expectations for parent involvement
- How to establish a supportive home environment for their children, communicate well with their children, and promote the development of their children’s self-esteem and personal discipline
- How to establish and maintain communication with school staff
- How to take advantage of resources like the library, tutors, and mentors

Since the program began in 1987, over 360,000 parents have graduated from the course.

Sources: *Inside Higher Ed*, “Y Tu Mamá También,” June 27, 2006, <http://insidehighered.com/news/2006/06/27/latino>; *Parent Institute for Quality Education website*, <http://www.piqe.org>

All schools should be required to provide students with in-school time to work on the plan and access to a guidance counselor or teacher-advisor who is assigned to the student throughout their high school career. Other than these basic requirements, individual schools and school districts should maintain autonomy in how they choose to use the standardized platform.

School districts in Minnesota and elsewhere have already begun to experiment with online higher education planning. The Minneapolis and Saint Paul school districts use online higher education planning tools and require them for high school graduation. These tool—known in Minneapolis as the My Life Plan and in Saint Paul as the Six Year Plan—incorporate some of what we recommend, but they are used inconsistently and are not always taken seriously by students. The state of North Carolina has instituted a requirement that every student complete a graduation project, and some resources are provided to help

students develop the project and connect with professional mentors.

The platform that we recommend will improve on all of these models. It will incorporate the career planning and resources of the My Life Plan and Six Year Plan and the advising included in [North Carolina's Graduation Project](#). Most importantly, it will provide real-world benefits to students by helping to compile and distribute all the materials necessary for admissions and scholarship applications.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2: Increase and improve the mentoring and advising available to immigrant students by tapping into nontraditional but trusted community resources.

Low counselor-to-student ratios mean that Minnesota students have limited access to advising and mentoring in their schools. While increasing the number of guidance counselors available to students in schools would be ideal, ongoing

budget limitations make it unlikely that counselor-to-student ratios can be significantly increased in the near future—even if the number of counselors in Minnesota schools were doubled, the ratio of advisors to students would be too low to provide the intensive, supportive advising that would benefit many immigrant students.

School districts, colleges and universities, nonprofit and community organizations and volunteers can work together to provide mentoring and advising to immigrant students without straining school budgets. Advising that immigrant students receive outside of school will provide students with more information and resources, and it will help students maximize their time with in-school counselors.

Such a collaboration would require leadership, both to coordinate activities among the involved institutions and to organize support for the initiative.

Photo courtesy of Admission Possible





Photo courtesy of Quito Ziegler/Minnesota Immigrant Freedom Network

a. Encourage colleges and universities to create programs through which immigrant college students serve immigrant high school students in accessing higher education.

The cultural understanding, community connections and experience in navigating admissions, financial aid and college life—and their position as role models—make immigrant college students ideal advisors.

Colleges and universities should create programs that encourage immigrant college students to assist immigrant high school students in accessing higher education. In doing so, they will create leadership and civic engagement opportunities for their current students, as well as encourage immigrant high school students to attend higher education.

Possible program models include community-based work-study assignments, community-based internships like those offered by the [Center for Urban and Regional Affairs](#) at the University of Minnesota.

b. Encourage immigrant college and university students to mentor and advise immigrant high school students, including by participating in programs such as those described above.

In addition to encouraging colleges and universities to develop programs through which more

experienced immigrant students can mentor younger students, the students themselves should be encouraged to participate.

At many colleges and universities, immigrant students are well connected to each other through cultural affinity groups. In addition to taking advantage of formal opportunities to mentor immigrant students, these groups should encourage members to share their experience and serve as advisors to immigrant high school students preparing for higher education.

Many student organizations are already taking these actions. The [Oromia Student Union](#) at the University of Minnesota, for example, has a mentoring and tutoring program in elementary and secondary schools, organizes an annual college fair for high school students and career fair for college students.

c. Create a network of mentors and advisors who assist immigrant students in navigating the college process.

People who serve as mentors or advisors to immigrant students do not always have the information or training they need to provide the best service to the students they advise. Many serve this role as volunteers—including coaches, religious leaders, and other members of the community—and those who advise students

professionally are usually not specifically trained to work with immigrant students or equipped with information to support these students' unique needs.

Creating a network of mentors and advisors would allow them to share information and ideas and would increase their knowledge and ability to support and advise students. Such a network would not require intensive staff support, but should be housed at an organization without affiliation to any particular school or institution of higher education, such as the [Minnesota College Access Network](#).

d. Create a new position within school districts that is responsible for coordinating resources available to immigrant students.

There are a wealth of programs and services outside of school available to support immigrant students in Minnesota, sponsored by colleges and universities, community centers and community-based organizations, nonprofits and religious institutions. However, getting access to these resources can be difficult, and as programs are created and others disappear, students can be lost in the shuffle.

Before creating new programs, we should ensure that students can access those programs and opportunities that already exist. While most schools or school districts in Minnesota have bilingual personnel in a variety of positions, those staff people are often used mainly as interpreters. Schools should enable these employees to use the cultural knowledge they have to help students access outside resources.

Adding personnel will increase costs to school districts. However, we believe that it is the most cost-effective way to help schools and students take advantage of the many resources that already exist.

II. Culture

HOW CAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUAL EDUCATORS LEARN TO ADAPT TO THE CHANGING CULTURAL MAKEUP OF THEIR STUDENT POPULATION?

Khadra is a senior in college and is working on her applications for graduate school. She was born in Somalia and spent several years in a refugee camp in Kenya before moving to Minnesota when she was twelve years old. She lived with her family in a Twin Cities suburb and, along with her brothers, was one of the only students of color in her high school. “Somali parents try not to get too close to schools . . . because they don’t want their kids to lose their culture.” As a result, she did not participate in any extra-curricular activities, and said that she spent high school feeling like an outsider. Her counselors didn’t help: although she was an excellent student (when we met her, Khadra was in the process of applying to PhD programs), her high school counselor discouraged her from taking challenging college preparatory classes, telling her that they were “too hard.”

Tou, who came to the United States from Cambodia when he was very young, was frustrated by the way teachers responded to students from other countries. “Language is one thing, but culture is another. Teachers should try to understand the cultures that the kids come from. If a kid is doing something weird, instead of just attributing it to cultural differences and leaving it at that the teacher should just ask the kid ‘Why are you doing that?’ The same goes for building understanding between teachers and parents.”

FINDINGS

Immigrant students have to navigate both their native cultures and the culture of American educational systems in order to be successful in school. In school, they have to adapt to new methods of teaching, different expectations for interacting with authority figures, and a wide array of choices (What class should I take? What college should I consider?). At home, they are expected to live up to traditional cultural norms, and often

mediate between their families and the outside world.

Sometimes, these cultures come into conflict, but much of this conflict would be avoidable if Minnesota’s immigrant communities and educational systems better understood each other. Immigrant families are constantly learning to adapt to American institutions and systems. Minnesota’s educational systems need to do their part and develop the capacity to adapt to the changing cultural makeup of their student populations.

INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS PRODUCE NEW CHALLENGES FOR MINNESOTA SCHOOLS

The increase in the number of immigrant students has introduced new challenges to school districts and individual teachers. For example, students in the St. Paul Public school speak over 100 languages and dialects, and students in the Minneapolis Public Schools speak





Photo courtesy of *Admission Possible*

over 150 languages and dialects. Even if teachers are committed to learning about new cultures, it is very difficult for them to become familiar with all the languages, cultural backgrounds and experiences that their new students bring with them to the classroom.

FAMILY CULTURAL NORMS ARE SOMETIMES IN CONFLICT WITH AMERICAN IDEAS ABOUT EDUCATION

American expectations about the relationships between schools, teachers, parents and students are often at odds with the tradition and experience of immigrant communities. Somali parents, for example, expect to defer educational decisions to teachers and school administrators. American teachers sometimes perceive this deference as a lack of interest on the part of parents in their children's education. American schools expect parents

to show up at student-teacher conferences, volunteer in the classroom, and watch over students' shoulder to make sure they complete their homework.

STUDENTS SERVE AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THEIR SCHOOLS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Many immigrant students serve as a bridge between the schools, which are struggling to serve students from a wide variety of backgrounds, and their parents, who do not always understand what the schools expect of them. The students we spoke to were familiar with this role and frustrated by it. They told us that kids who emigrate as teenagers are more successful because they are well grounded in their home culture before arriving in the United States—and conversely, that students who came to the United States when they were very young feel pulled between

the culture of their families and the American culture in which they are being educated.

Immigrant students are both challenged and supported by their cultures—and they face those challenges both at home and in the schools. They are usually the first in their families to adapt to unfamiliar American customs and institutions. Their families are in a constant state of learning, and immigrant students feel a responsibility to help them.

CONCLUSION 2.1: To ease that burden, **Minnesota's systems of education need to develop the capacity to adapt to the changing cultural makeup of their student populations.**

RECOMMENDATION 2.1: Create new mechanisms to prepare teachers, advisors and school administrators in Minnesota to effectively educate immigrant students.

Immigrant students need teachers who understand the strengths and challenges they bring with them to school, and who can communicate effectively with them and their families. As the number of immigrant students in Minnesota increases, the need for teachers and other school staff who are experienced with and committed to working with immigrant students increases.

Not every teacher need be an expert in educating students of various international backgrounds—but some should, and all teachers should have a basic understanding of the role that culture plays in the education of immigrant students.

We recognize that preparing school personnel to better serve immigrant students is both a long-term and short-term need. To address the short-term need, we recommend that all teachers receive a basic level of training in serving immigrant students through the teaching license renewal process. To ensure that, in the longer term, more teachers are experienced in working with immigrant students, we recommend two ways to increase the focus on immigrant students in new teacher training programs.

a. Require continuing education on multicultural issues for all teachers, guidance counselors and school administrators.

Continuing education is required for Minnesota teachers to maintain their teaching licenses. As a condition of ongoing licensure, all teachers should be required to attend continuing education programming on multicultural issues, including immigrant education. Such a requirement will ensure that all Minnesota teachers are exposed to the issues that immigrant students face.

b. Prioritize content in current urban education programs to prepare new teachers to serve immigrant students.

Urban education programs—such as those at Concordia University, Hamline University, Inver Hills Community College, Metropolitan State University and the University of St. Thomas—go beyond traditional education programs to prepare their graduates to teach in urban environments. Because immigrant students make up a large and growing proportion of the student population of Minnesota’s urban school districts, these programs should include content focused

on preparing teachers to work with immigrant students.

c. Create new centers for excellence in teaching and advising immigrant students.

Following the model of the urban education programs, new centers for excellence in teaching and advising immigrant students should be created. These centers would prepare graduates who are committed to working in largely immigrant schools and districts to be experts in teaching immigrant students.

Because Minnesota’s urban school districts are already served by



the urban education programs at Metropolitan State University and Hamline University, and because immigrant students make up a larger proportion of the student population in many Greater Minnesota school districts than in the Twin Cities, the centers for excellence in teaching and advising immigrant students should be located in Greater Minnesota.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2: Increase opportunities for immigrants to become teachers, counselors and school administrators, especially through nontraditional avenues.

Immigrant teachers, counselors and school administrators help immigrant students by providing a bridge between students' home cultures and the culture of American education, and by serving as role models and leaders in immigrant communities.

It is important to note that we do not recommend that inexperienced immigrant teachers be thrust into the schools, but rather that programs be established to develop qualified teachers from immigrant communities. Possible models include the following (see Take Note, current page):

- A masters-level teaching certification program, such as the [Newcomer Extended Teacher Education Program](#) at the University of Southern Maine.
- A cohort program with intensive training, mentoring and ongoing support, similar to [Teach for America](#).
- A teaching certification program for immigrants currently working in non-faculty positions in schools who wish to become teachers, counselors or school administrators, such as the

[Southeast Asian Teacher Licensure Program at Concordia University.](#)

- Scholarships for immigrants entering teacher education programs.

TAKE NOTE: EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Newcomer Extended Teacher Education Program

University of Southern Maine, Portland

As a part of its goal to increase the number of qualified school personnel serving culturally and linguistically diverse students in Maine schools, the University of Southern Maine's College of Education and Human Development offers the [Newcomer Extended Teacher Education Program \(ETEP\)](#).

Newcomer ETEP is a master's-level teaching certification program that provides support for immigrants preparing to become teachers in Maine schools, especially related to English language skills, academic achievement, and tuition support. The program is completed in two years, longer than the nine-month standard program, allowing participants more time to develop their academic skills, become familiar with the Maine school system, and prepare for their exams.

Teach for America

[Teach for America](#) recruits recent college graduates to spend two years teaching in low-income communities throughout the United States. Teach for America teachers are not required to have experience as teachers or a degree in education. New Teach for America teachers receive an intensive five-week training program and ongoing professional development. In some states, Teach for America teachers are required to work toward obtaining a teachers license, most often by attending classes at a local college or university.

Teach for America does not target immigrant teachers, but a similar model could be employed to recruit and support new immigrant teachers.

Southeast Asian Teacher Licensure Program

Concordia University, Saint Paul, Minnesota

The [Southeast Asian Teacher licensure program \(SEAT\)](#) at Concordia University is a bachelor's degree completion program for individuals whose first language is not English and who are currently employed in Minnesota school districts as paraprofessional, educational assistants and teaching assistants. Students continue working full time while completing requirements toward a bachelor's degree and teaching licensure.

III. Cost

WHAT DO IMMIGRANT FAMILIES NEED TO OVERCOME THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES RELATED TO HIGHER EDUCATION?

Claudia and Eduardo, both from Guatemala, have four daughters. Their eldest is a student at the local community college, their second daughter went away to a private four-year liberal arts college, and the two youngest girls are in elementary school and junior high. They worked hard to put their daughters through a private Catholic school, and they are willing to do whatever it takes to put them through college, too. Other families they know struggle, they said, because they try to save their money so that they can go back home. “What I earn is for the family,” Eduardo said, “so they can do what they want to do.” Their second daughter, Jackie, has a similar attitude: “I know I’m going to have loans, but I will be able to pay them and choose what I want to do with my life.”

Mary works for a large corporation based in Minneapolis. When her son was getting ready to graduate from high school, the first place she turned to for help paying for college was her employer. “They had a college fair, they had information about financial aid, and they have scholarships.” Her son received one of the company’s scholarships—and now he works there, too.

FINDINGS

For most low- and middle-income families, the cost of higher education is a significant barrier. The financial challenges that affect low-income and first-generation college students affect immigrants disproportionately—more immigrants live under the poverty line than native-born Americans on the whole.¹⁸ In addition, many

immigrant students face other constraints unique to their immigrant status.

THE COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION IS DAUNTING

The cost of higher education continues to climb, and for many families it feels out of reach.

Minnesota has among the highest tuition rates in the country.¹⁹

Attending a community college in Minnesota requires 22 percent of an average family’s income. Attending a public college or university requires 26 percent of an average family’s income; private colleges or universities require 54 percent.²⁰

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act

The DREAM Act is a proposed federal legislation that would facilitate a path to legalization for undocumented students and would allow undocumented students who meet state residency requirements to qualify for in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities. Under the DREAM Act, an undocumented student who had lived in the U.S. for at least five years would, upon graduation from high school, be permitted to apply for conditional status that would authorize up to six years of legal residence. During that six year period, the student would be required to either graduate from a two year college, complete at least two years toward a four-year degree or serve in the U.S. military for at least two years. If those conditions were met, permanent residence would be granted at the end of the six-year period. The DREAM Act would also eliminate a federal provision that discourages states from providing in-state tuition to undocumented immigrant students. The DREAM Act was first introduced in 2001 and has not been passed into law.

Source: *National Immigration Law Center*, April 2006

The In-State Tuition for Immigrant Status Bill (Minnesota Dream Act)

The Minnesota Dream Act would allow undocumented immigrant students to pay in-state tuition at Minnesota’s public colleges and universities, provided that the student attended high school in Minnesota for at least three years; graduated from a Minnesota high school; and signed an affidavit stating that they are actively seeking to obtain U.S. citizenship. The In-State Tuition for Immigrant Status Bill was passed in both the state House and Senate in 2005, but was withdrawn from the higher education omnibus bill after Governor Pawlenty threatened a veto. An adapted version of the bill failed again in 2006.

Source: *Minnesota Immigrant Freedom Network website*, <http://immigrantfreedomnetwork.wordpress.com>

Federal financial aid has not kept pace with the increasing cost of attending higher education. In 2004, the average Pell Grant covered 25 percent of total costs at public four-year colleges, down from 47 percent in 1975.²¹ Under Minnesota state law, any increase in federal grant aid (such as an increase in the maximum Pell Grant) is accompanied by a corresponding decrease in state grant aid, so increases in federal grants do not reduce the amount a student pays.

The high cost of a college education produces other, more subtle, barriers in addition to the core challenge of raising the necessary funds. Our focus groups revealed that the financial benefits of going to college, weighed against the expense, are either unclear (because some jobs, such as construction or skilled factory work, can pay as well as the jobs students would get after college) or are so far in the future that they are not a significant incentive. Families told us that even if scholarships and other financial aid are abundant, it is hard to conceive of spending or borrowing the cost of education when living paycheck to paycheck, and relatively small expenses—like a \$200 deposit on a dorm room—can be major stumbling blocks.

Undocumented students worried that they would graduate with significant college debt and still be unable to get a job in the United States. Undocumented students in Minnesota are not eligible for in-state tuition or state or federal financial aid; these students have to turn to the limited supply of scholarships that do not require applicants to have a Social Security number. Without federal law change, these students will remain ineligible to work in this

country even after earning a college degree.

In the course of developing these recommendations, the Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education came to believe that many of the challenges that immigrant students face regarding the cost of higher education can be solved with better information and better preparation. While the cost of higher education is daunting for many students, it can often be overcome if students have access to information about the options available to them (including scholarships and grants) and if they are able to enter higher education without needing remedial education. However, some policy changes can help to reduce the burden of tuition.

CONCLUSION III: Minnesota should be at the forefront of exploring and developing mechanisms that allow immigrant students to finance higher education in ways that are consistent with their culture, family obligations, and immigrant status.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1: Equalize eligibility of part-time and older students for scholarships and grants.

Immigrant students are often non-traditional students: their language ability, financial stresses and familial obligations make them more likely to postpone higher education or to attend part time. Because most admissions information and scholarships are targeted to full-time, traditional-age students, immigrant students are often at a disadvantage.

Colleges, universities, college access programs and other scholarship-granting institutions should revisit their eligibility guidelines and outreach programs to equalize treatment of non-traditional students.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2: Pass state legislation to allow all students who meet residency requirements to attend public colleges and universities at the in-state tuition rate, regardless of immigration status.

Students in Minnesota who are undocumented pay out-of-state tuition rates at most of Minnesota's public colleges and universities. The higher tuition makes the financial barrier—already a roadblock for many immigrant students—even more significant.

Minnesota should pass legislation that would allow students who meet certain requirements (such as living in Minnesota for a given number of years and graduating from a Minnesota high school) to pay in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities, regardless of their immigration status.

Ten states currently have laws in place that allow undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition.

Studies in California, Texas, Kansas, and New Mexico show that undocumented student enrollment increases after such measures are put in place. Because of tuition from these newly-entering students, revenues for public colleges and universities tend to increase.²² An analysis by the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation—a nonpartisan policy research organization—found that state colleges would gain millions of dollars each year if Massachusetts were to enact such legislation.²³ Moreover, states with such laws in place have not experienced displacement of native-born students by newly-entering undocumented students.²⁴ In Minnesota, according to studies done to date, this legislation would not have a significant fiscal impact.²⁵

RECOMMENDATION 3.3: Make state higher education aid available to all students who meet residency requirements, regardless of immigration status.

Currently, in addition to paying out-of-state tuition at public colleges and universities in Minnesota, state and federal financial aid is not available to immigrants who have Temporary Protected Status or who are undocumented. While the State of Minnesota cannot override federal law to offer federal aid to these students, Minnesota should make state financial aid dollars available to these students.

Three states—Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas—currently have similar legislation in place.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4: Develop a standardized financial aid application that can be used to obtain state financial aid and institution-specific scholarships.

To obtain federal and state financial aid, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In addition, many higher education and scholarship-granting institutions use the FAFSA to award scholarships, grants and other financial aid.

The FAFSA form requires detailed information about a student’s family financial situation, including Social Security numbers. As a result, many immigrant students do not complete the form. These students lose the opportunity to obtain not only federal aid, but also much private aid that might be available even to students who do not qualify for FAFSA.

Some students who are ineligible for federal aid do complete the FAFSA in order to apply for other grants or

What about a flat tuition rate?

The Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education considered recommending a flat tuition structure that would eliminate differential in-state and out-of-state tuition rates that Minnesota’s public colleges and universities.

Flat tuition policies can help Minnesota’s public colleges and universities attract students at a time when enrollment is projected to decline and, in doing so, attract future graduates to Minnesota’s workforce. According to a study done by the Legislative Auditor, approximately 47 percent of students from Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota who graduated from the University of Minnesota stayed to work in Minnesota; approximately 35 percent of students from those states who graduated from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities also stayed in Minnesota. (“Higher Education Tuition Reciprocity,” Office of the Legislative Auditor, September 2003). Mainly for these economic reasons, the Minnesota Legislature passed legislation in 2007 that eliminated out-of-state tuition rates at seven Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) campuses and prohibited MnSCU institutions that currently offer a single tuition rate from adding a higher out-of-state rate.

In addition, flat tuition policies are sometimes encouraged by advocates for immigrant students, because they reduce the cost of higher education for students who are undocumented while avoiding the political challenges of legislation that targets undocumented immigrants.

The study committee had significant concerns about recommending a flat tuition policy for Minnesota:

- A flat tuition policy might encourage Minnesota public colleges and universities to focus recruitment and support on higher-achieving students from other states, rather than increasing efforts to reach harder-to-serve students from Minnesota.
- Because Minnesota taxpayers subsidize students at public colleges and universities, a flat tuition policy would make Minnesotans subsidize out-of-state students, possibly reducing the availability of government aid to low-income Minnesotans.
- Over time, by reducing revenue from out-of-state students, a flat rate policy might raise the cost of higher education for Minnesota students.

In the end, the study committee was not confident that the potential benefits of a flat tuition policy outweighed the costs, and decided not to recommend it.

loans. We heard from financial aid officers that it is confusing to keep these applications separate from those to be submitted to the federal

government, and that mistakenly-submitted applications sometimes put students and their families in jeopardy.

A standardized alternative financial aid application would allow students to apply for private scholarships (and, if recommendation 3.3 became law, for state financial aid) without completing the FAFSA. It could also simplify financial aid processes for colleges and universities who wish to grant scholarships to these students.

We do not recommend that higher education or scholarship-granting institutions require students to complete the alternative application—which would add a complicating step to the admissions and aid process for many students—but rather that they accept either the FAFSA or the alternative application as they make their financial aid and scholarship awarding decisions.

NOTES ON RECOMMENDATIONS 3.2 THROUGH 3.4

Critics of these recommendations argue that allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates (and otherwise making it easier for these students to attend higher education) rewards immigrants who have violated United States law by overstaying their visas or by entering the country illegally—and that this will encourage increased illegal entry into the United States.

Others point out that changing state laws avoid the real problem of immigration reform that should be addressed at the federal level, and they argue that state policy change may contradict, at least in spirit, the Illegal Immigration Reform

and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which prohibits states from offering tuition levels to undocumented immigrants on the basis of residency in a state that are not offered to US citizens living outside of the state.

These are real and valid concerns. However, the principled and practical reasons to support the recommendations outweigh the potential risks.

The fundamental principle that forms the foundation of this report is that higher education should be encouraged, and it should be a realistic opportunity, for all immigrant students. In following this principle, we do not leave out students who are living in Minnesota without documentation (usually as a result of the actions of their parents). To ensure that higher education is a realistic opportunity for these students, we must help them overcome the financial barriers they face as a result of their undocumented status.

The practical arguments for allowing undocumented students access to state financial aid and in-state tuition are equally compelling. College graduates are more knowledgeable about government and more likely to volunteer, and are less likely to use state assistance programs or burden the criminal justice system.²⁶

The economic argument for these recommendations is even more compelling. By the time a student graduates from high school, Minnesota has already invested significant resources in that students' success. To prevent that student from pursuing higher education would be to squander our investment.

Federal Immigration Legislation

Immigration status is, for many students, the most significant barrier to higher education. Students who are undocumented are not eligible for public financial aid and many private and institutional scholarships, pay out-of-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities in most states, have difficulty finding work after receiving their degrees, and live under constant fear of deportation. Students who are on Temporary Protected Status are also ineligible for federal financial aid.

While there have been attempts to address these barriers by various states, immigration is fundamentally a federal matter. State policy changes, such as those that we recommend, can reduce the cost of higher education for some immigrant students. However, state policy changes cannot legalize students' residency, allow them to work, or make them eligible for federal financial aid. Removing all of these barriers would dramatically increase the opportunities for undocumented immigrant students to attend higher education and help meet Minnesota's need for a highly educated, highly skilled workforce.

The Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education learned about and discussed several policy proposals that would reduce or eliminate these barriers, including the Federal DREAM Act (see text box on page 21). However, federal immigration policy, with its implications for the economy, government services, and foreign relations, is beyond the scope of this study committee, and we have not taken a position on any federal legislation.

IV. Language Preparation

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PREPARE IMMIGRANT STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE-LEVEL ENGLISH SKILLS?

Fatima's boys, Ahmud and Abdi, are six and ten years old. Ahmud started kindergarten this fall; Abdi is in fifth grade. Fatima is worried about the education they are getting in the Minneapolis Public Schools; she doesn't think the English Language Learner classes they are taking are helping them. "Why do they spend a whole month learning one letter? They do 'B.' His homework is to write 'B', 'B', 'B.' He already knows the whole alphabet!"

Maria has three children: two boys who are in school now and a baby daughter who is still at home. They live in a small town in southern Minnesota. "The biggest problem is English," she said. "In Mexico, the schools are better; they know more than the other students. In Mexico, they are doing 4th grade math, but here they don't know English, so they do 1st grade math. They shouldn't have to do that just because they don't know English."

FINDINGS

To increase the number of college

graduates, Minnesota must first ensure that its high school students are adequately prepared for higher education. For many immigrant students, gaining proficiency in English is an essential first step to success in other subjects—and for too

many, the English Language Learner systems currently in place are not doing the job.

A LACK OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH HINDERS STUDENTS' ABILITIES TO SUCCEED IN HIGH SCHOOL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Almost 63,000 Minnesota public school students are classified as English Language Learners (ELL).²⁷ Improving the English proficiency of these students must be a priority for Minnesota. English Language Learners are held back in all subjects because their comprehension of the language prevents them from demonstrating their skills: on

the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) and Basic Skills Tests (BST), in all grades and subjects, English Language Learners score substantially lower than other students. In 2005, for example, 74 percent of English proficient students

Even students who are technically proficient in English often struggle when they enroll in higher education.

had "proficient" scores on the 11th grade math MCA; only 34 percent of English Language Learners had proficient scores on the same exam.²⁸ English Language Learners are also less likely to graduate from high school.²⁹

Even students who are technically proficient in English often struggle when they enroll in higher education: the basic level of language proficiency provided by ELL programs in primary and secondary schools is not as rigorous as the language required to be successful in higher education. Remedial English classes at the state's public colleges and universities are full (with both immigrant and native-born students); students who require remedial language instruction use up scholarships and government financial aid on those classes, leaving them with more limited funding for degree-based coursework.

IMMIGRANTS TODAY NEED HIGHER-LEVEL ENGLISH SKILLS THAN PREVIOUS GENERATIONS

Learning English has always been a challenge for new immigrants. Today's students face an even greater challenge than earlier generations

English Language Learner Funding in Minnesota

School districts in Minnesota are required to evaluate students for proficiency in English, and to provide English language instruction to those students deemed to be not proficient. The State of Minnesota provides \$700 per year for English language instruction for each ELL student for five years or until the student earns a proficient score on the Test of Emerging Academic English (TEAE), whichever occurs earlier. If, after five years, a student is not proficient in English, school districts are required to continue to offer that student English language instruction, although state funding is no longer available for that student. Districts with a high concentration of ELL students receive an additional \$250 per year for each student that qualifies under the above requirements.

TAKE NOTE: EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

La Escuelita

Minneapolis, Minnesota

La Escuelita is a non-profit, after-school and summer program focused on academic enrichment and leadership development for Latino students in the Minneapolis Public Schools. Students spend upwards of 16 hours a week at La Escuelita and receive academic enrichment, homework assistance and one-on-one tutoring. Not all La Escuelita students are English Language Learners. Students are given support in reading and literacy, preparing for basic standards and college entrance exams.

“Literacy Through Children”

Loma Linda Elementary School, Anthony, New Mexico

Three nights a week, the school library at Loma Linda Elementary School is opened to the public while English Language Learners in the fourth, fifth or sixth grade tutor or read to younger children from the community. This service-learning model helps both the older and younger students gain fluency in English.

of immigrants: to be successful in Minnesota’s information economy, they must be proficient in rigorous academic English—something that was rarely expected of earlier generations. The English Language Learner systems in Minnesota were built to an earlier standard of basic proficiency, and too often they do not adequately prepare students for higher education or professional careers.

CONCLUSION 4.1: The ELL programs administered by local school districts are an essential part of the solution, but **the ultimate goal must be to build a system that prepares immigrant students not just for basic proficiency in English but for the college-level English skills required for success in higher education.**

RECOMMENDATION 4.1: Provide additional support to students identified as English Language Learners, in the form of longer

school days, a longer school year or programs outside of school.

English Language Learners (ELL) have more to learn than other students: they must master the language in addition to the subject content required of all high school graduates. Students whose home language is not English face another challenge: their parents are less likely to be able to help them with homework.

To ensure that these students are not given substandard academic content and get the support they need to be prepared for higher education when they have graduated from high school, English Language Learners should be given more classroom time. This additional time could take the form of a longer school day, a longer school year, a special intensive

English program during the summer, or partnerships between the school district and outside organizations. The additional time should be made available at no cost to ELL students.

While *requiring* additional time would ensure that students receive the extra support they need, many students have obligations outside of school that may prevent them from extending their school day or year. Rather, students and their families should have the option—and be encouraged—to receive additional classroom time.

Adding classroom time for ELL students will be expensive, but it is essential. Without gaining proficiency in English, these students will not be successful in higher education—or in the high-skilled jobs that the global information economy demands. It is also possible that the cost of adding classroom time will be offset as students progress more quickly in their comprehension of English and require less remediation in other subject areas.



Photo courtesy of Quito Ziegler/Minnesota Immigrant Freedom Network

RECOMMENDATION 4.2: Improve Minnesota’s English Language Learner systems by standardizing identification of ELL students, setting aggressive goals for student progress, and promoting the use of best practices by all Minnesota schools.

There is no one English Language Learner system in Minnesota. Instead, responsibility for ensuring that students are proficient in English is devolved to individual schools and school districts. Schools and districts in Minnesota develop their own systems for identifying and assessing English Language Learner students and can use the curricula of their choice to provide English language instruction.

Local authority over schools is at the core of American educational philosophy, and we do not recommend that the state fully standardize English Language

instruction in Minnesota. Instead, we suggest that the state develop a standardized process to identify and assess English Language Learners, take a more active role in researching

and promoting best practices for English Language Learners, and set aggressive statewide goals for student proficiency and progress.

a. Develop a standardized process to identify and assess English Language Learners, to be used by all Minnesota school districts.

The same process should be used to identify and assess all ELL students in Minnesota—currently,

there is no single set of criteria in Minnesota (or the nation) to do this. A standardized process will ensure that every student who needs additional instruction receives it, and that students

There is no one English Language Learner system in Minnesota. Instead, responsibility for ensuring that students are proficient in English is devolved to individual schools and school districts.

who move during the school year do not lose their status as English Language Learners. In addition, such a process will allow Minnesota to track the success of ELL students throughout the state.

b. Identify and expand best practices to deliver high-quality English instruction to English Language Learners at all levels.

The Minnesota Department of Education should take a

Photo courtesy of Admission Possible



more active role in identifying, assessing and promoting best practices for English Language Learners—not only in K-12 schools, but also in programs offered by colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations and informal community collaboratives.

c. Set aggressive goals for individual English Language Learner student progress and proficiency.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires that Minnesota evaluate the English language proficiency of English Language Learner students in reading, writing, speaking, listening and comprehension, and that the state show annual gains. The state sets **progress and proficiency targets** for English Language Learners, which districts are responsible for reaching. Under No Child Left Behind, the state is evaluated based on whether districts meet these targets.³⁰

The Minnesota Department of Education sets progress and proficiency goals for ELL students based on their length of time in Minnesota schools. Each ELL

student is given three tests, to evaluate listening and speaking, reading, and writing.

Progress is measured based on students’ performance on these tests compared to their results from the previous year. For example, in Table 1 above, six of nine scores improved over the previous year, so progress for this group is measured at 66.67%.

Students’ proficiency is measured by students’ scores on the reading, writing, and listening/ speaking tests.

As required by No Child Left Behind, the Department of Education has set out the goals below for ELL student progress and proficiency.

To motivate stronger progress, the

progress and proficiency goals for ELL students should be more aggressive.

Increasing the state’s targets would make it more difficult for Minnesota to meet No Child Left Behind requirements—if districts are striving to meet more challenging goals, odds are that more districts will fall short. But the state should press districts harder on the progress made by ELL students.

Federal policy may also change, but regardless of federal law, Minnesota should continue to set strong goals at the state level.

TABLE 1

Student	Reading	Writing	Listening and Speaking
Bao	improved	not improved	improved
Ibrahim	not improved	not improved	improved
Flora	improved	improved	improved

Source: Minnesota Department of Education. “*ELL Program Guidelines: Minnesota Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) Process and Procedures.*”

TABLE 2

MINNESOTA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER PROGRESS AND PROFICIENCY GOALS

PROGRESS:											
Years in MN schools	2003-'04	'04-'05	'05-'06	'06-'07	'07-'08	'08-'09	'09-'10	'10-'11	'11-'12	'12-'13	'13-'14
0-2.99	62.32	64.12	65.92	67.73	69.53	71.34	73.14	74.94	76.75	78.55	80.36
3-5.99	67.01	68.22	69.43	70.63	71.84	73.05	74.25	75.46	76.67	77.88	79.08
6+	64.49	65.17	65.85	66.53	67.21	67.89	68.57	69.26	69.94	70.62	71.30

PROFICIENCY:											
Years in MN schools	2003-'04	'04-'05	'05-'06	'06-'07	'07-'08	'08-'09	'09-'10	'10-'11	'11-'12	'12-'13	'13-'14
0-2.99	.82	1.26	1.69	2.13	2.57	3.01	3.44	3.88	4.32	4.76	5.19
3-5.99	1.86	2.32	2.78	3.24	3.70	4.17	4.63	5.09	5.55	6.01	6.47
6+	1.49	2.13	2.76	3.40	4.04	4.67	5.31	5.94	6.58	7.21	7.85

Source: Minnesota Department of Education. “*ELL Program Guidelines: Minnesota Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) Process and Procedures.*”

The Challenge Ahead

Minnesota must increase the number of students who are prepared for and successful in higher education.

There are many things Minnesota can do to ensure that the state has enough college graduates to meet the needs of the economy. One thing we must do is ensure that all of our high school students are prepared for and give them the opportunities to succeed in higher education.

Demographic trends and economic trends indicate the need to focus on students of color in general, and immigrant students in particular.

In this report, the Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education has laid out what it believes to be the most important policy questions regarding immigrant students and higher education—and ten

recommendations to help answer those questions. Now, we challenge the education, business, nonprofit and government communities—and the Citizens League and the MACC Alliance of Connected Communities, who sponsored this work—to implement these recommendations.

Issues for Further Study

In the course of gathering information about immigrant students in Minnesota and developing the recommendations included in this report, the Study Committee on Immigration and Education uncovered some gaps in information and topics in need of research beyond the scope of this committee.

1. Data on immigrant students in Minnesota schools.

Like most states, Minnesota does not track the immigration status of its students. While this protects their privacy, it also means that we cannot say for certain how many immigrant students there are in Minnesota schools, how well they perform as compared with the larger student population, or whether any interventions that occur are successful at increasing their participation in higher education.

2. A formal study of how immigrant college students received information about higher education.

Those immigrant students who have made it to college have a wealth of information that would be helpful in developing programs to assist younger immigrant students. A formal study of what information and support these students received would help determine what kinds of interventions should be created, expanded and promoted.

In the absence of such a study, the Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education has developed recommendations based on input from immigrant students and parents, teachers and other staff in K-12 and higher education and policy researchers.

3. A comprehensive study on federal immigration reform, including the federal DREAM Act.

As discussed above this report does not make any recommendations for federal immigration reform. However, immigration status is the most significant barrier to higher

education for many students, and a study that focused on federal immigration reform could identify strategies to increase access to higher education for these students.

4. Reforming Minnesota's financial aid systems.

As the cost of public and private higher education has skyrocketed in recent years, Minnesota's systems of financial aid have been strained. Increases in available aid have not kept up with increases in tuition and families are finding it more and more difficult to pay for their students' education. Addressing the challenges to our financial aid systems would go a long way to increasing access to higher education for all Minnesota students.

Dissent

This report would be remiss without a fair, public articulation of some concerns that arise from allowing students to qualify for in-state tuition and opening up aid based on physical residency, not legalized residency.

In their supporting text, recommendations 3.2 and 3.3 articulate well the potential benefits of these policies; certainly there are many, both economic and social. And, the question of what do we do with those young people that are already here? cannot be avoided.

Assuming a long view, however, it is difficult not to become concerned with the moral hazard invoked by subsidizing tuition and opening direct aid this way, and resulting secondary consequences.

The moral hazard argument goes like this: Promise of lower tuition and the hopes of financial aid create a powerful incentive for undocumented families to attempt crossing the US border, and to come to Minnesota from other states. There is anecdotal evidence that 14- and 15-year-olds are already crossing into this country to attend high school in anticipation of then going on to further schooling.

The push now for providing post-secondary aid to undocumented students comes in part from having already invested in their primary schooling. And, we can use them—need them—in the workforce. The next logical step then would be to make possible the opportunity to put to use the degrees these students do end up earning. We would want them to use it in the United States of course, because by this point we

have invested much time and money. From here, advocates say, their status should therefore—somehow—become “normalized.” Potential illegal immigrants see the opportunity.

This may well be one of the more viable directions to take, eventually, in coordination with other actions. But to traverse such a path of growing—compounding—incentives without having first in place a national plan to control and regulate migrant in-take is to exacerbate an already very serious national problem. I suspect people come illegally to this country, and specific states, because of the promise of future opportunities and privileges. There is a time for states to play political gadfly to the federal government, but this does not seem to be it, or to be the best way to go about the task.

Some important secondary consequences to consider involve most immediately those students, whether American citizens or qualified foreign nationals, who would be negatively impacted. There are limited spots at public colleges and universities, and these undocumented students inevitably would be filling some. For those institutions that are particularly selective, each desk given to an undocumented student is bumping another deserving, legal resident, forcing them to attend a different school than that of their primary choosing.

These students are “faceless” victims, as the saying goes. We do not see the young man or woman’s sacrifice as we do the undocumented student’s

gain, but the injustice is still very real.

The burden of secondary consequence is more evident when we examine recommendation 3.3 on financial aid. Resources are scarce. Middle and lower income families need all the help they can get. Hard-working students are leaving the undergraduate with private debt that used to be unique to our time. To dilute the limited state aid dollars available is to place an additional burden on those that are already struggling. These families should not be subjected as casualties to an effort that helps one group at the unfair expense of another.

Recommendation 3.2 appears, upon initial examination, to be of lesser controversy. Offering in-state tuition for a non-legal resident is more subtle than recommendation 3.3’s distribution of state aid. It is indirect. The effect, however, is similar. In both instances public money is being used to subsidize young people who have no legal claim to the resources.

This leaves a pragmatic dissenter in a difficult position. Is there a constructive alternative to propose? Can we continue with the status quo? Certainly not. A solution does need to be found, and the spirit behind this report’s recommendations may not be far off.

The conclusion of this dissent then is this: Unless the moral hazard and secondary consequences can be reasonably neutralized, states should refrain from creating powerful incentives that, over time, would act only to exacerbate the challenges afflicting our immigration system. State-led initiatives to spark federal

action are legitimate and often appropriate, but this issue is unique because there is only so much a state can do by itself.

It is ironic that in popular conversation our society has taken to calling these sorts of policies “pro-immigrant.” In the short term they harm the many who wish to become part of American society in a fair and just manner. In the longer-term,

supporting a culture of rogue policy undermines the integrity of our country’s immigrant nature.

As recommendations 3.2 and 3.3 stand, without corresponding state and federal support on borders and employment practices, we would be assuaging current problems while encouraging continued (and likely greater) law-breaking in the future. Unfortunately, this will come at the

financial and academic expense of everyday citizens and students. Such an imbalance we would do best to avoid, even if the underlying motivations are meritorious.

Signed,

Tim R. McDonald

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The Work of the Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education (Phase II: Solutions)

CHARGE TO THE COMMITTEE

As Minnesota's immigrant population has increased over the last three decades, our institutions of education have wrestled with questions of how to integrate immigrant students into our schools—and whether our schools are up to the task. There is little consensus over how best to educate immigrant students, and little information is available to show us what or whether we have been successful.

The 2006 Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education identified key policy questions in four areas—information, culture, cost and language preparation—that we believe are key to increasing immigrant students' readiness for and success in higher education. The 2007 Immigration and Higher Education Solutions Study Committee is charged with developing proposals that answer each of these four questions:

- **Information:** How are information and services about K-12 and higher education best delivered to immigrant students and their families?
- **Culture:** How can educational institutions and individual educators learn to adapt to the changing cultural makeup of their student populations?
- **Cost:** What do immigrant families need to overcome the financial challenges related to higher education?
- **Language Preparation:** What is the best way to prepare immigrant students for college-level English skills?

The Study Committee on Immigration and Higher Education was conducted by the Citizens League in partnership with Marnita's Table and the MACC Alliance of Connected communities. The Study

Committee held 17 meetings over 2007 and 2008, in addition to various meetings of working groups on each of the four issues questions above.

Methodology

This work is being carried out in three phases:

Phase I - Findings (June – October 2006): Study committee to gather information about immigrant students in Minnesota, identifying key barriers to accessing higher education for immigrant students in Minnesota.

Phase II - Recommendations (August 2007 – June 2008): Second study committee to develop recommendations to increase the number of immigrant students in Minnesota who access higher education.

The Phase I and II study committees included representatives from MACC affiliated agencies and other community based organizations, the public and private systems of higher education, the business community, city and county government, education unions, college access programs and K-12 schools, as well as other interested citizens.

In addition to traditional forms of research and committee discussion, the study committees conducted 13 focus groups and partnered with Marnita's Table to host 7 dinner-table conversations to learn more about the challenges that immigrant students face—and how those challenges can be overcome. Participants in these conversations included immigrants from over 15 countries, parents, high school students, students at community colleges, public and private universities and students that had dropped out of high school. The stories of the some of the students and parents we talked with are included throughout this report.

Phase III - Policy Advancement (ongoing)

Together with other organizations and individuals working on these topics, the Citizens League will seek opportunities to advance the recommendations of this report, whether through legislation, policy change at colleges and universities, or partnerships with foundations, nonprofits, and community-based groups.

STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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ADC Foundation	Otto Bremer Foundation	Minneapolis Foundation	Travelers Foundation
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ADDITIONAL THANKS:

Hashi Abdi <i>Somali Action Alliance</i>	Nadya Fouad <i>University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee</i>	Ramon Leon <i>Latino Economic Development Center</i>	Mitch Pearlstein <i>Center for the American Experiment</i>
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Abdimalik Askar <i>Minnesota State Colleges and Universities</i>	Jennifer Godinez <i>Minnesota College Access Network</i>	Mike Lopez <i>Minnesota State Colleges and Universities</i>	Barbara Ronningen <i>Minnesota State Demographic Center</i>
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Iris Bordayo <i>SEIU Local 26</i>	Pakou Hang <i>Saint Paul City Council candidate</i>	Carlos Mariani <i>Minnesota Minority Education Partnership</i>	Rahma Warsame <i>student panelist</i>
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Marco Davlia <i>student panelist</i>	Frank Hernandez <i>Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching</i>	Juventino Meza <i>student panelist</i>	Laura Wilson <i>Family and Children's Service</i>
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Jason Fossum <i>Minnesota State College Student Association</i>	Michelle Latvala <i>Global Volunteers</i>	Martha Okenfels-Martinez <i>Minnesota Immigrant Freedom Network</i>	Saint Paul Public Housing
		Christine Osorio <i>Paul and Sheila Wellstone Elementary</i>	The hosts and participants of our focus groups and Marnita's Table dinners.
		Traci Parmenter <i>Admission Possible</i>	

STAFFING AND SUPPORT:

Victoria Ford and Annie Levenson-Falk authored this report and staffed the study committee with assistance from Jody TallBear, Sherrie Simpson and Shereen Eldeeb.

About the Citizens League

The Citizens League has been a reliable source of information for Minnesota citizens, government officials and community leaders concerned with public policy for over 55 years. Volunteer committees of Citizens League members study issues in depth and develop informational reports that propose solutions to public problems.

The Citizens League depends upon the support and contributions of individual members, businesses, foundations, and other organizations.

For more information, visit the Citizens League [website](http://www.citizensleague.org) at www.citizensleague.org.

MISSION:

The Citizens League builds civic imagination and capacity in Minnesota by:

- Identifying, framing and proposing solutions to public policy problems;
- Developing civic leaders in all generations who can govern for the common good; and
- Organizing the individual and institutional relationships necessary to achieve these goals.

CIVIC OPERATING PRINCIPLES:

1. We believe in the power and potential of all citizens.
2. We believe in democracy and good governance.
3. We believe in civic leadership and active citizenship.
4. We believe in good politics and political competence.
5. We believe that all individuals and institutions must sustain these principles from one generation to the next.

CIVIC GUIDELINES:

1. Defining an issue: People who are affected by a problem or issue will help to define it in keeping with our mission and principles.
2. Demonstrating transparency and good-governance: Leaders will establish a transparent governance process that expects all participants to engage in decision and policy-making.
3. Contributing resources: All participants will help identify and contribute resources to address the problem or issue
4. Sustaining solutions: All participants will help advance and sustain recommended policy strategies

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About the MACC Alliance of Connected Communities

The MACC Alliance of Connected Communities is a 10-year-old strategic partnership of 26 community organizations that have joined together to leverage their collective resources and voice on behalf of the communities they serve. As a collective, they work with over 300,000 individuals in the Twin Cities metro area each year. They employ over 1,000 people and have

revenues of over \$90M. Eighty-five percent of its clientele live below the poverty level and seventy-five percent are people of color. Thirty-five percent of its clientele are new Americans.

MACC's mission is to unleash the connective power of communities to build their own futures. The unique alliance honors the

individual identities and histories of its member agencies and forges innovative partnerships among members and with nonmember agencies, businesses, leaders and the communities we serve.

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Neighborhood House

Phyllis Wheatley Community Center

Pillsbury United Communities

Plymouth Christian Youth Center

Sabathani Community Center

Tubman Family Alliance / Chrysalis

Way To Grow

West Seventh Community Center

About Marnita's Table

Marnita's Table was founded to break down the barriers of race, class and culture in order to build authentic, positive and productive relationships.

Over the past 3½ years, we've welcomed over 4,500 people of every ethnicity, class and culture to forge strong relationships and find common ground over an abundant meal in a private home. We literally provide everyone a seat at the table for peer-to-peer exchange and collaboration.

Evidence of the need for the work Marnita's Table undertakes is

everywhere. Despite the recent election results, rates of racial disparities in student achievement, incarceration, access to healthcare, income and employment remain high throughout the United States. Our work is guided by a simple idea: to succeed in being a fully integrated society, we must socialize across the boundary lines that so often divide us.

Before a healthy community can arise, relationships among disparate organizations and individuals must be built through trust and

mutual respect. Social capital is the foundational capital that allows the human, intellectual and financial capital invested in a community to realize its full potential. We have learned it is not enough to meet and work with people only in institutional settings.

Building social capital intentionally helps break down the structural causes of disparities.

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