

RESEARCH STATEMENT

My work aims to improve how postsecondary institutions respond to significant demographic transformation, evidenced by shifts like the greater than four-fold growth in the Latino share of the U.S. population since 1970. Since beginning as faculty at University of Texas at San Antonio in 2007 and continuing at The Ohio State University in 2016, I have extended a sustained program of research to examine how historically marginalized communities, different postsecondary institutional types, and various educational settings shape economic and social opportunity structures. To expand equity in postsecondary opportunities, I focus on: (1) social stratification, (2) institutional diversity, and (3) building inclusive environments in higher education.

Latinos and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), the foci of much of my research, are each very recent social constructions. Latinos/Hispanics were first established as a Census category in 1980. HSIs were first federally designated as institutions in 1992. Addressing emergent and complex areas of research like these has influenced me to employ multiple methods of inquiry, including quantitative and qualitative approaches. My article in *Journal of College Student Development* (Núñez, 2011), assigned in several higher education courses in the U.S., uses qualitative methods to examine how taking Chicano Studies courses influences first-generation Latino students' transitions to college, through offering them critical tools to understand their ethnic backgrounds and to navigate their universities. Another article in *Educational Policy* (Núñez & Gildersleeve, 2016) employs mixed methods to explore various ways in which equity-oriented college outreach can broaden postsecondary opportunities for Latino migrant students.

My research and that of others has illustrated how diverse identities within the Latino category (e.g., ethnicity, im/migrant, English Learner) can differentially shape opportunities. Consequently, I have developed conceptual perspectives to understand how such identities intersect and are situated within contexts that circumscribe postsecondary opportunities. One exemplar is a multilevel model of intersectionality in *Educational Researcher* (Núñez, 2014) that addresses the diversity within the Latino population to illustrate how different educational dimensions are constructed by historical, economic, and social forces. This model also addresses how these dimensions can be transformed to advance educational attainment of historically marginalized groups, such as migrant college students (e.g., Núñez & Gildersleeve, 2016).

I have also led efforts to understand the characteristics of the federally designated group of nearly 500 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) in the U.S. Defined as institutions that enroll at least 25% Latino students, HSIs play a critical role in educating what is now the largest population of color in U.S. higher education, enrolling over 60% of Latino college students. Shaping this line of inquiry has involved not only writing peer-reviewed articles, but integrating scholarship of junior and senior researchers in my co-edited book *Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Advancing Research and Transformative Practice* (Núñez, Hurtado, & Calderón Galdeano, 2015). The first book to comprehensively depict the organizational qualities of HSIs, it won a 2016 International Latino Book Award. Since HSIs include both 2- and 4-year, and public and private types of institutions, I also led the development of the first typology to classify HSIs, using the method of cluster analysis, in the top-tier *Journal of Higher Education* (Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo, 2016). This work illustrates my capacity to map new, critical areas of research.

The recognition of HSIs in research and policy appears to be increasing, particularly since my move to OSU. In 2011, I co-authored the first empirical study in the top-tier *American Educational Research Journal (AERJ)* to address institutional characteristics of HSIs (Núñez & Bowers, 2011). In 2017, *AERJ's* editors invited me to write a Commentary to explain the emergence and development of HSIs during the past 100 years, to provide historical context for an article published in the seminal Centennial issue of *AERJ*, which celebrated the 1916 founding of AERA (Núñez, 2017). Beyond the academy, my scholarship has informed federal policymaking to build capacity for HSIs to educate diverse populations. In two different legislative acts in 2017, Congress mandated that the National Science Foundation build its first grant programs targeting HSIs. According to the Harvard-based Scholars Strategy Network (SSN), a non-partisan organization that brings academic research to inform policymakers, my SSN research brief (which was circulated to congressional stakeholders) informed the development of this legislation. Also, NSF's Center for Science and Engineering Statistics *2018 Science and Engineering Indicators* (the biannual NSF report on national STEM characteristics) published my HSI typology, to illustrate the diversity and role of HSIs in contributing to the science workforce.

In addition, my research has examined the factors affecting postsecondary trajectories of first-generation college-going, Latino, and migrant students. I have extended this research to address English Learner (EL) students, writing the first national profile of EL postsecondary students, in the first book ever to examine ELs' transitions to higher education (Núñez & Sparks, 2012). This inquiry has continued since my arrival at OSU, in my role as lead author of the first publication ever to conceptualize the transition of EL students to higher education, which appeared in the top-tier *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (Núñez, Rios-Aguilar, Kanno, & Flores, 2016). Not only has this piece provided scholars with scaffolding to conduct further research on this population, it has afforded diverse agencies like The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) a greater understanding of the holistic issues affecting EL students' K-12 to postsecondary trajectories. This work illustrates how I have provided a foundation for other researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to address the needs of historically less visible or defined groups in higher education.

I have also enhanced the application of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction to study how educational structures affect educational success. Specifically, I have examined how access to various resources (e.g., financial, human, cultural, and social capital); socialization in schools, families, and organizations (habitus); and broader political and social contexts (field) shape educational opportunities for marginalized populations. For example, I have advanced more culturally relevant ways to understand college success for Latino students, through several articles and a co-authored book-length monograph *Latinos in higher education and Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Creating conditions for success* (Núñez et al., 2013). One recent article about the experiences of Latino students who work during college, published in *The Review of Higher Education* (Núñez & Sansone, 2016), presents a rare example of research that employs qualitative methods to examine students' perspectives of working during college; it expands the conceptualization of employment during college from simply being an opportunity cost (e.g., the number of hours a student works) to being an opportunity to develop academic, financial, social, and cultural capital in college. This body of research illustrates how I have contributed to new ways of understanding the needs and assets of historically underserved groups in higher education.

In another line of inquiry, I have explored the development of inclusive organizational cultures for historically marginalized groups in higher education. This research addresses how higher education personnel enact leadership to foster student success for diverse demographic groups. Past publications in outlets including *Innovative Higher Education*, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, and *Academe* focus on how Latino faculty in HSIs mentor students and how institutions can support Latino faculty. Since coming to OSU in 2016, I have extended this line of research to examine the cultural practices that support diverse students in pursuing geosciences careers, because the geosciences exhibit far less racial/ethnic diversity than most other science fields. In 2016, the NSF Geosciences Directorate administered its first-ever grant portfolio to center higher education organizational activities and leadership (rather than student recruitment programs) to promote inclusivity. It selected me as one of the first social scientists to work on this grant program. In my role as a Co-Principal Investigator on one NSF grant, I am examining the organizational culture of outdoor fieldwork using ethnographic methods. With a team of seven geoscientists and one other social scientist, I will apply this research to offer an NSF-funded institute in early October 2018 to advance inclusive practices in fieldwork. Currently, I also work on an NSF grant to examine effects of a career-based education program for geology undergraduates. Together, these grants total over \$800,000. This research, the first of its kind, demonstrates my capacity to conduct interdisciplinary work. As my faculty and student teams disseminate our research on geosciences culture, I will continue to collaborate with practitioners. With a large (\$9,900,900) NSF grant awarded to the Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and an additional NSF workshop grant (\$200,000), I will extend my research on inclusive STEM culture and HSIs, as a Co-Principal Investigator on these projects.

Collectively, my research has advanced understanding about emergent topics that address demographic changes in higher education. My publications in outlets ranging from high impact generalist (e.g., *Educational Researcher*, *American Educational Research Journal*, *Harvard Educational Review*) to more specialized higher education practitioner journals illustrate my facility for disseminating research to different scholarly audiences. According to Google Scholar, my research has been cited almost 5,000 times. I anticipate that these citations will increase, as research on these emergent topics continues to grow. In addition to publishing 34 peer-reviewed articles, 18 book chapters, and over 20 publications in other outlets (e.g., reports, briefs, blogs), I have presented over 50 invited talks about my areas of expertise. Beyond academia, my work has reached the broader public, including an appearance on National Public Radio's show *Morning Edition* and an editorial in the *New York Times*. As a publicly engaged scholar, I have published policy briefs for the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, the UCLA Civil Rights Project, and the Scholars Strategy Network. This research has informed policy on topics like support for Latinos and HSIs, especially in science fields. After beginning my position at OSU, my expertise in these areas was recognized through my appointment as a committee member of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Committee on *Closing the Equity Gap: Revitalizing STEM Education and Workforce Readiness in the Nation's Minority-Serving Institutions*. In that role, I have co-authored an NAS report, published in late 2018, that examines these institutions' contributions to talent development in the U.S. My consistent scholarly productivity and potential have also been recognized through being one of seven scholars in the U.S. to be awarded a 2018-2019 Spencer Mid-Career Grant, which will enable me to extend my research to incorporate more organizational and systemic perspectives. Moving forward, I will continue to map new territory to advance more equitable higher education opportunity structures.