



CONSEJOS PARA SU FUTURO EN EDUCACIÓN: SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR FUTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION FROM CHICANOS AND CHICANAS



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Sometimes it feels as if we are alone in the road to higher education, but we are not alone. We can learn many things from the advice and support of other Chicanos/as. By sharing our struggles and survival skills we can overcome barriers and reach our educational goals. In this booklet, Chicanos/as and Latinos/as share some of their valuable experiences in higher education with the hope that their observations will motivate and help others.

This handbook has been developed from *charlas*, or roundtable discussions, that were held at the annual conference of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS). One of the primary missions of NACCS is to advance the professional interests and needs of Chicanas and Chicanos in the academy, and one way of achieving this objective is through mentoring.

The *charlas* were open discussions on topics of particular relevance to students of color. The discussions covered a wide array of issues, such as the difficulty in being the first in the family to attend college, racism on campus, and practical matters like time management and applying to graduate school. The *charlas* were first convened at the 2000 NACCS conference, and have been included every year since that time. The *charlas* were facilitated by students and faculty who had personal experience in various aspects of higher education. The discussions, which were open to all conference attendees, were taped and later summarized.

The result — a concise pamphlet of useful advice to help you chart a course to success — is in your hands. We hope that you find something of interest and value in these pages, and that you'll pass on the information to others.

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FIRST GENERATION TO GO TO COLLEGE

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE THE FIRST TO GO TO COLLEGE?

Being in the first generation in your family to go to college can be very difficult. Being in the first generation, and a recent immigrant can be especially tough. Some issues that students have mentioned are: 1) the lack of diversity on campus or finding people with a similar background to yours; 2) finding your comfort zone or feeling at home; 3) feeling that you do not belong; and 4) racism and stereotypes based on how you look, talk, or dress. Different people experience different things. Also, universities can be very impersonal places with a lot of people, and it can be intimidating to try to find your niche. A suggestion for dealing with these issues is to seek out school organi-

"They [parents] were worried I wouldn't be okay. They came to visit and saw that I was happy and I was growing up. You want to be respectful to your parents, but you also want to get away. Just let your parents know how you feel."

zations and people with whom you share similar interests. Most schools have a minority recruitment center or student center, and you should visit these places to learn what resources are available to you. Joining campus

organizations can help in meeting people and becoming more connected with campus life. There are many different types of student organizations, from athletic to Greek to activist — look for ones that spark your interest. You can learn more about these organizations by asking other students or by attending campus organization fairs that provide more information.

Remember that being the first to go to college is highly valued, especially among people of color. Knowing this often helps to get us through difficult times, but by itself it is not enough. So make an effort to seek out your community. If you have difficulty finding a group of people on campus or in the community you can also look to Internet chat rooms for communities. Try Chicano/Latino Net: <http://clinet.ucr.edu>, or the Chicana Feminist Homepage: www.chicanas.com as starting points.

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LEAVE HOME?

It will be difficult to leave home for most students. Your family may not want to let you go. This can be especially true for women. Sometimes families do not understand why you have to go away for at least four years. The best way to help your family understand is to talk to them about what you are studying and what you hope to do after graduating. Once they see that you are doing fine, your family will become more at ease with your leaving. Just remember to always be respectful — that way you avoid additional grief for you and your family.

It often helps to talk to your family about what your days are like on campus, and to let them know how much time you spend in class and studying. Talk to them about what it is like so that they can have a better understanding of what you are doing. It also helps to show your family your campus.

Bring them to parent weekends and show them around. If you cannot bring them to campus, send them postcards of the campus and take a lot of pictures of your living arrangements and friends to share with your family.

"It is important to have personal support."

Other issues may arise when you find that the new environment is different than home. This may be a very difficult time in your life because adjusting to a new and different environment can be challenging. You will probably get homesick at some

point. The best thing to do is to talk about it with your family and your friends. Let your family and friends know before you leave that you will probably get homesick, but that you want them to encourage you to keep going and not give up. Be very clear that they are not supporting you when they say "drop everything and come back home." Know whom you can count on to have these conversations with and simply ask them to listen to you. Oftentimes, that will be enough. This can be hard because your family and friends may be missing you too, and wish that you would come back home. Sometimes, just keeping yourself occupied can make things easier. When you are busy you will not think about how much you miss being home. The next thing you know, the semester will be over and you will be on your way home for break. Don't forget that you can be done in four years and return home with a degree and many more opportunities.

"I have two younger siblings that look up to me to succeed. I cannot let them down. I was also brought up with the expectation of getting a college degree. I respect my parents and I will not let them down."

HOW DO I BALANCE MY TIME BETWEEN FAMILY, FRIENDS AND STUDYING?

Balancing time between family and friends while in college can be difficult. Studying can be very time-consuming, usually lonely, and tiring. You need to find a balance between family, friends, and study time. Finding your own daily rhythm with the demands of school is key. It also helps to do other things that are not academically related.

"My friends would take turns making home-cooked meals and we would all eat together once a week."

For example, you can make it a point to have dinner once a week with fellow students where you have all agreed NOT to talk about school or anything related to your studies. You can get to know this group outside of class and find it to be relaxing. Think of these techniques as somewhat of a reward system. Tailor your reward system to your hobbies or maybe find new ones.

You may also find a group of friends or classmates that you can study with on a regular basis. This can help you structure your studies and provide some socialization at the same time. Studying with other students and sharing notes can be highly beneficial and help improve your understanding of class material.

Balancing time between extracurricular activities and school is difficult also. The best advice is to not take on too many projects. This will help ensure that you can produce all required work in a timely fashion. If you work best at your studies at a particular time of day, try to schedule your activities accordingly. Everything else should be put aside during your study/writing/homework time. Once you figure out a daily schedule, you will see that it is easier to get your work done, and to reward yourself later for working hard. A regular work routine has the added benefit of reducing stress.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IF I DECIDE TO LIVE AT HOME AND GO TO SCHOOL?

Living at home and going to school can be difficult because of the different demands of college and home life. It can be challenging to balance spending time with family and time studying. Often, other family members are not in school and thus have different schedules than yours. They may expect you to spend more time with them when you are home, or to have a similar schedule. It can be helpful to give your family a class and studying schedule at the beginning of the semester so that everyone knows when to expect that you will be in class or studying. It might also be helpful to plan a chores schedule with your family so that you also are helping around the house.

Some students find that it is difficult to find a quiet place at home to get studying done, and decide to rent a study carrel at the library for a small fee. You can keep your books and papers in the study carrel, so you will not have to carry books and papers from school to home as much. Also, look for any programs on campus that cater to commuter students. Oftentimes, programs will offer coffee get-togethers for students who do not live on campus. This is a good opportunity to meet other students in your same situation.

Don't forget to recognize and appreciate how your family is helping you. They are probably saving you money on rent and utility expenses, and helping you by providing home-cooked meals. Your family may be helping in many other ways as well, and it is good to recognize and appreciate the support.

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO WORK WHILE GOING TO SCHOOL?

Some students have to work, because it is expected of them, or because they have to pay bills. Some students are married or have children and have to juggle those responsibilities as well. If you have to work, it may be helpful to find a job on campus so that you can limit your commuting time. Although on-campus jobs may pay less in the short-term, they can often help you create important networks. If you work in a department or for a professor, for instance, they can write you letters of recommendation in the future. Also, the jobs on campus are often more flexible with your class, study, and exam schedules than are off-campus employers.

Working a more demanding job or working more hours will make going to school and finishing in a shorter time more challenging. Most students say that it is much harder to juggle time between studying and working than expected. Often, it seems like certain jobs will allow a lot of free time to read and study, but most students say that it does not actually work out that way. It is often hard to have less money than your friends or family who may be working full-time and not going to college. It can be tough to see that friends or siblings have new cars, stereos and more money for entertainment. Even though it is hard, putting off major purchases until you graduate will ensure that your debt will be lower when you finish. Working fewer hours will allow you more time to study and take classes, and thus graduate sooner.

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION ON CAMPUS

WHAT IS RACISM/SEXISM?

Racism involves an individual's prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior toward people of a given race, or institutional practices that subordinate people of a given race. Sexism involves an individual's prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior toward people of a given gender, or institutional practices that subordinate people of a given gender.

Sometimes it is hard to tell if you have experienced discrimination, because situations can be ambiguous. Racism and sexism can be very subtle.

"It can be hard to tell if another person is just a jerk or a racist."

There are different levels of discrimination. Sometimes there is blatant racism because of the way one looks (skin color) or speaks (accent), and sometimes students of color are ignored or automatically stereotyped. This can make you feel that you do not belong. A very serious level is termed harassment. In any university it is unlawful to discriminate on the basis of a person's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, or sexual orientation. Harassment occurs when:

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, education, or participation in a university-sponsored activity
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions, education decisions, or other decisions affecting an individual's participation in a university activity
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, education, or participation in a university-sponsored activity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment.

There are many resources at universities to deal with harassment. In any of these cases, you can report the event to your University's Equal Employment Opportunity Office and/or Affirmative Action Office.

IS THERE RACISM ON CAMPUS?

There can be negative perceptions of Chicanos and Latinos by some people at universities, including students, staff, and faculty, though not all students experience discrimination or racism. We sometimes experience sexism or homophobia as well. Often minority students are thought of as taking resources away from other students because of affirmative action. You can read more about affirmative action at: www.aclu.org/students/campusaffax.html.

If you are researching schools to attend, it is a good idea to ask students and faculty at the prospective schools about the racial climate on campus. Ask about representation and discrimination in terms of race, gender, and sexuality. Chicanos and other minority groups are highly underrepresented on the majority of college campuses, and racism or discrimination will exist to some degree on almost all campuses.

"In college, people put stereotypes on you. You have to deal with those things, but then I think that there are so many people that would like to be where I am now."

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO DISCRIMINATION?

To avoid feeling as if you are the only person fighting against discrimination and stereotypes, it can help to join groups on campus that are active in combating discrimination.

It may also help to look for a comfort zone on campus. Many institutions have resource centers for minority students and women. You will find that there are others like you who are experiencing the same things. It can be very lonely if you are one of the few people of color in your classes or in your dorm. It can help to talk to others who share your situation or who have experienced similar discrimination. It is important to remember that it is not about you as an individual. You are not alone in this experience. Discrimination is often institutionalized and systemic.

Check to see if your campus has a Chicano/Hispano/Latino Resource Center or other ethnic or women's resource center. By talking to other people with similar experiences you will learn that

"I dealt with racism by remembering that many people have worked hard for me to be where I am now."

you are part of a community and that you are not alone. Students say that not all students and faculty of color share their experiences or perspectives on discrimination. Sometimes people of color can be just as racist or sexist as others. Everyone has different

"If someone doesn't like me then that is too bad."

experiences and different ways of responding to discrimination. Stay open-minded. You may be surprised to find support from someone from whom you would least expect it.

Be sure to ask students of color which professors they like, and if they encountered any that they felt were racist or sexist. Their insights may help you choose the best classes.

Be prepared to talk to other students when you encounter erroneous assumptions or stereotypes. Some people have not been exposed to other ethnic groups and may have negative stereotypes. Often other students will expect you to be an expert about everything in your ethnic group. Of course, you cannot expect to know everything about your culture, but you can take ethnic studies classes or history classes to learn more about it. Look to websites such as the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute: www.trpi.org for updated statistics and policy information related to Chicanos and Latinos.

You may want to participate in "unlearning racism" workshops or activities on campus, or help in planning them. There are many groups that will come to your campus to put on these types of programs: www.ywca.org. Attending other cultural events or multicultural events on campus can help you feel that you are part of a larger community. Read more about racism on campus at: <http://racereactions.about.com/cs/racismoncampus> to learn more about what action students on other campuses are taking against racism.

"I remember approaching my high school counselor about going to a university and she tried to encourage me to go to a junior college instead. Not that junior colleges are a bad place, but she just made me feel as if I was not good enough for a university because I am a minority woman. I didn't take her advice. I went on with my initial plans. I have learned to pick my own battles."

If you feel you are experiencing racism and discrimination from students, faculty or staff you should talk to someone you trust on campus about the situation. Every campus

"I was able to deal with discrimination by being involved with the Chicano community. I met people that were like me and struggling with me. I found my comfort zone there."

has an Affirmative Action Office, Equal Opportunity Employment Office, and university-specific student handbooks including sections on discrimination and sexism.

GETTING INTO GRADUATE SCHOOL

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL?

If you are thinking about graduate school, but are unsure whether to apply or not, your best bet is to plan as if you will apply and do so as early as possible. You will want to keep your grades strong throughout your undergraduate education, not just your last year or two. Typically, you will need a GPA of 3.0 — a "B" average — or higher to be competitive enough to apply for graduate school. There are exceptions, but you want

"It is about knowing how to play the game."

to maximize your chances of being accepted. So plan early and keep your

grades up! Also, the earlier you begin thinking about graduate school the more time you will have to develop relationships with professors in your field of interest. This will be especially important when it comes to asking for letters of recommendation when applying to graduate school.

If you are interested in graduate school you should gain more exposure to research in your field of interest as an undergraduate. Look for research assistant jobs on campus or volunteer research work with faculty. There are also many undergraduate research-based outreach programs.

HOW DO I APPLY TO A GRADUATE PROGRAM?

Start by researching programs that you are interested in. The Internet is a good place to start. You can do a general search for graduate programs (www.gradschools.com) or search within universities you are interested in. You should look for professors in the department who are doing the type of research that you are interested in learning more about. You should contact professors via e-mail to ask them specific questions about applying to the graduate program. You may need to search electronic resources through library databases to find recent faculty publications in case they are not on the department website. You should ask faculty members if they are accepting more students into their research team, and let them know you are interested in their research.

It is important to know and remember that each application takes a lot of time and effort to put together. You have to fill out the application, gather letters of recommendation, include transcripts from all colleges and universities attended, write a personal statement, and make sure that your GRE scores will be sent to that institution. Everything has to get there on time, so **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE**. A good idea is to begin planning one to two years prior to graduating with your B.S./B.A. degree.

You need to be aware that it will cost money to apply to each graduate program. There are fees to take the GRE, and application fees for each school. There is also the cost of making copies of your statements and sending transcripts to each school. You should save money in order to be prepared to send several applications at once. There are, however, programs such as Project 1,000 (<http://mati.eas.asu.edu/p1000>) that help send graduate school applications for underrepresented students free of charge so that they do not need to pay each school's application fee.

"There is this stigma that you are not smart if you do ask for help. Be humble and ask lots of questions."

If you are considering a Ph.D. program after earning your bachelor's degree, think about applying to dual-degree programs where you earn your master's on the way to your Ph.D., or directly to master's programs. This is a good back-up plan. Oftentimes the competition for acceptance into a Ph.D. program is extremely tough since you will compete against students who may already have a Master's degree in that field. To maximize your chances of being accepted, it is wise to think of your education in steps. You should also consider applying to several schools and different types of programs. All students should consider doing national searches for programs; many schools offer special financial packages to out-of-state students. Not every school specializes in all the interest areas. Graduate study becomes much more highly specialized and it is better to work with the researchers who are doing exactly what you are interested in.

Tailoring your personal statement to specific programs is also important. Keep in mind that you want to be the best fit for that program. When you are researching a graduate program find out who is doing what research. If a particular area of research is of interest to you, tailor your personal statement to the professor(s) who are involved in it. If you are able to do this, they'll be more likely to see how you fit into their program. When looking for faculty members to work with, keep in mind that tenured faculty typically will have more national contacts that may help you find a job in the future. Consider also that sometimes a "prestigious" program may not support its students as much as less prestigious programs might. It is important to look for graduate programs that are very supportive of their students. You should look for programs that offer tuition waivers, research fellowships, teaching assistantships, stipends, student organizations, and social activities, office space, and computer access.

It is also recommended that you send your application early. **Do not wait** until the last minute, and end up having to send it by next-day air delivery. By sending your application in early you be able to call the graduate program to verify that all required items were received, which will also allow you enough time in case you need to resend them.

WHAT IS THE BEST GRADUATE PROGRAM FOR ME?

It is best to look into programs that are going to make you happy with your future job. It is extremely important that you choose a program on the basis of what type of work you really want to do in the future. Apply to a program you feel you fit into in terms of *research interest* or *job preparation*.

It is also helpful to decide whether you want to be an academic professional or work outside of academia. This will help determine what type of graduate program you should pursue. You will need to decide if you prefer to teach and do research or if you are interested only in research, only in teaching, or only in applied aspects. Ask a lot of questions to professionals in the prospective discipline about their regular working days to learn more about how they spend their time. Also, by trying some of these jobs (research assistant, teaching assistant) as a graduate student you can learn more about which one interests you the most. If you are thinking about getting a job immediately after you complete your degree, then you should ask what types of jobs graduates of the program usually obtain.

"If I were to do it over again, I would explore non-local schools. It was assumed that if I stayed at home, it would be less expensive."

If you are thinking specifically of a Ph.D. program, you need to go to a place that can meet your needs in research. You should look for departments in which the faculty have current active research programs — in other words they are running new programs or have current funding for research. You should also look for departments in which faculty have current publications (within the past five years). Look for programs that offer research fellowships or research assistantships. Obtaining a fellowship or assistantship will allow you to spend more time doing research. When researching universities for doctoral programs, look for the designation "Research I." This designates it as primarily a research-focused institution of the highest quality.

If you want a well-rounded program that can help you decide if you really want to go on to a Ph.D., it may help to start with a master's program. The difference between a doctoral program and a master's program is that a Ph.D. usually takes longer to complete, and typically requires you to do original research and write a dissertation, while a

master's degree usually takes about two years to complete and may require writing a thesis. Think of the thesis as a mini dissertation. Depending on the master's program that you choose, you may be able to do something other than a thesis (some programs may let you do an internship instead).

Make sure to thoroughly research graduate programs — they can be very different, even in the same field. Look for programs on the Internet, talk to current graduate students, and follow up with the actual departments.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION?

Once you have decided which schools to apply to and have received the application materials, you should begin requesting letters of recommendation from professors who know you and your work well. Good choices for letters of recommendation are professors that you have worked with more closely, perhaps on their research team or on an independent study project. Also, more senior professors or tenured faculty (designated as professor emeritus, full professor, or associate professor) often have more national contacts and their letters will be viewed as more prestigious. However, it is usually okay to include one letter of a faculty member, work supervisor, or university administrator who knows you more personally. However, for graduate programs it is considered stronger if you have letters from faculty or at least someone with a Ph.D. Most programs require at least three letters. It is okay to ask individuals to send out more than one letter for you to different schools. It is also okay to ask individuals at a later date to send another letter for you to a different school; it is often easier for them because they already have a copy of the earlier letter they wrote.

Asking for these letters can be tough, but remember, your professors are people too, and were once in the same situation. In fact, most encourage and support students going into graduate school. To be both practical and courteous, it is best to ask early to make sure your references have at least a month before they need to send the letter of recommendation. Start by asking yourself and your professor if he or she can write you a GOOD letter of recommendation. Again, this will more likely be someone whom you have worked with closely. You do not want a professor to write you an "okay" letter (perhaps from a professor who only knows you as one of many students in a large class); at the very least you want a good recommendation, if not great. Once your professor says "of course!" that's when you hand him or her a folder with all of the information they need to complete the process.

"I noticed they (professors) were delighted to see all my application materials in order."

Faculty members are asked to write letters for many students, so help them out as much as you can in the process. The items that should be in the folder you give to those writing you letters of recommendation are: pre-addressed and pre-stamped envelopes for the letter they are going to write, a copy of your application, personal statement, transcripts, and résumé. Have a folder ready for each person you ask. Most importantly, do not wait to do this. Make sure you allow your professor time to do this and to ask any other questions he or she may have for you. Do this no less than four weeks before your application is due.

Another helpful hint regarding letters of recommendation is to see if your current school offers special services to students applying to graduate school. Typically, for a fee, you can use a campus letter service to keep all your letters of recommendation on file for a specified amount of time (usually two or three years). These services keep your letters confidential and organized.

Your professors send their letters of recommendation directly to the letter service and these letters will be sent to any school you request. The advantages of using a letter service are that:

1. You will not have to run around to pick up letters of recommendation from each of your professors;
2. The schools to which letters are sent will know that they were sent “blindly,” in other words you are confident of your skills, and thus did not read your letters beforehand or have the opportunity to tamper with them; and
3. Your letters will be kept on file for several years allowing you to reapply if necessary, to apply to other schools, or to take time off before starting graduate school without having to worry about losing contact with professors from whom you would ask for recommendations.

WHAT IS THE GRE AND WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IT?

The GRE is the Graduate Record Exam; it is similar to the SAT and the ACT tests you took before applying to college the first time. You are required to take it and submit your scores when applying to graduate school. The GRE consists of several timed tests in the areas of vocabulary, analytic skills, and mathematics. The official web site for the Graduate Record Exam is: www.gre.org.

Preparing for the GRE is all about reviewing. Try not to worry about it too much. Books and guides to help you prepare for the GRE are available at bookstores, and online. Make time to study and take practice tests — that way you’ll know what to expect on the day of the exam.

The following websites have a wealth of information about the GRE:

www.800score.com

<http://iiswinprd03.petersons.com/testprepchannel>

www.gre-exam-prep.com

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~osmirnov/gre>

You may also want to enroll yourself in a preparation course for the GRE. Typically your school will offer GRE prep courses for a fee. These classes are often significantly less expensive (around \$200-300) than taking a prep course through KAPLAN or the *Princeton Review* (around \$1000). Any of these preparation courses are a great investment as they will familiarize you with the format of the test and teach you important test-taking techniques that will help you save time.

The night before try to get a good night’s sleep. On the day of the exam make sure that you do not eat something that is going to make you drowsy (avoid big meals). You want to be as alert as possible. Dress in comfortable clothes and in layers so that you have a sweater or something warm to put on if the room is too cold, or to take off if it gets too hot. The GRE costs around \$100. Fee waivers may be available, or you may be able to apply for scholarship money that will pay the test fee.

HOW CAN I FINANCE GRADUATE SCHOOL?

It is very important that you know what kind of financial support is available when you are deciding on your graduate program. Do not be embarrassed to ask, because financial aid availability is a major determinant for deciding where you will go.

The perfect program would be one that offers you financial as well as academic support. It is also a good idea to look for professors outside of your program who are involved in research projects you find interesting, and to ask about the possibility of working for them. Also, ask about tuition waivers for out-of-state students.

Look to see if the program you are interested in offers Graduate and Research Assistant positions, Teaching Assistant positions, or fellowships. Working for your department can be beneficial because you will work close enough with your professors that they know what your work and class load is like. Also, you may be more comfortable letting them know how your studies and research are progressing. By working in your department you can also gain important professional experience that may help you get a job in your field of specialization in the future. You should first seek a position in your home department, and then, if nothing is available, branch out to other departments.

TA/GSI Positions

Teaching Assistants (TAs) also known as Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) are positions sometimes available to students. Oftentimes these positions pay a portion or all of your tuition, cover health insurance fees, as well as pay an hourly wage. For these jobs, your responsibilities may include grading and student advising.

RA/GRA Positions

Research Assistants (RAs), also known as Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs), are positions that are also sometimes available. Like Teaching Assistantships, these positions often pay a portion or all of your tuition, cover your health insurance fees, as well as pay you an hourly wage. For these jobs your responsibilities may include writing literature reviews, preparing articles for publication, and grant writing.

Fellowships

Fellowships can be thought of as scholarships since they provide students with money to attend graduate school for one or more years. This money is not loan money and thus does not need to be paid back. However, some fellowships will require you to work for an organization during or after your education on a specific project or task. This type of funding is given to students for their academic achievements and interests. The funding often covers your tuition, your health insurance, and gives you a monthly stipend to live on. Fellowships are sometimes granted through the department to which you apply, the graduate school, or the university. Additionally, there may be national fellowships to which you may apply, depending on your academic performance and study interests.

"If you work for a faculty member, don't let them take advantage of your time, stand up for yourself."

FAFSA

Fill out the "Free Application for Federal Student Aid" (FAFSA) online. To find out more information from the U.S. Department of Education, go to the FAFSA web site at: www.fafsa.ed.gov. You may qualify for some type of aid. It is best to fill out the application early on in the application process.

STARTING AND FINISHING THE THESIS AND DISSERTATION

HOW CAN I GET STARTED WRITING?

Writing can be very personal, and therefore is sometimes very difficult. It is crucial to figure out when your best writing time is. If you haven't already, do this as soon as possible. Also, forming a writing group can be helpful. This group should consist of no more than six people, preferably people that are writing their theses or dissertations. Plan to meet once a week for no more than two hours. During these two hours, one piece of writing will be reviewed and critiqued. It will help you expand and develop your thoughts, style of writing, and focus.

"Don't have too many projects going on at one time."

Here is a suggested structure for your writing group that may make the process easier and less painful. Provide each member of your group with a copy of a brief statement of why you are writing a particular piece, who it is for, and if this work is an early edition of a bigger piece (these are just examples). Keep the statement BRIEF. Also provide a copy of your actual writing for everyone in the group. First, the writer should read his or her own piece aloud. Next, another person in the group reads it again aloud. During the first reading, everyone else just listens, while during the second reading all group members can follow along and make notes on their own copies if they wish.

After the second reading, group members respond to the questions listed below. The writer listens and takes notes. It is best to have the writer wait to respond until the end.

- What words or phrases stood out to you? (This is a very brief part of the reading session.)
- A reader will then give a brief summary from memory of what he or she felt the writer was saying.
- The reader then will tell the group a "story" of their reading process. This is where the reader can address certain questions and explanations brought about in the first question, if necessary. This part is intended to allow the reader to give a detailed account of associations, questions, confusion, and/or feelings as the work was being read. Following a chronological order is best. Avoid making suggestions as to what the writer should do or meant to communicate. Simply identify the words or phrases that stood out the most as well as why they did.
- Each reader can give a metaphor of what the writing felt like. Treat this part as a game you can play at the very end. Let the metaphors come naturally. Some examples are a roller coaster, an ancient artifact, busy city streets with no crosswalks, etc. These metaphors should refer to the style of writing rather than the actual meaning of the piece.
- Next, the reader will ask the writer how he or she is feeling about the feedback and if any changes have been triggered by the readers' comments. Lastly, the writer can ask questions of the readers. Here the writer can ask specific questions that were not addressed earlier or not fully explained. An example of a question is: what suggestions do you have for me?

This can be a very time-consuming process. Make these meetings a commitment. The feedback you get is priceless. Also, since time is precious, each group should have a timekeeper who is responsible for maintaining order so that each section mentioned above is addressed.

Most universities have writing centers that students can go to for help. These are a great resource because writing centers are usually located on campus, and you can take in your papers to be proofread, or take free classes on how to improve your grammar and technical writing skills. This is not cheating; take advantage of the free resources your campus has to offer.

HOW CAN I COMPLETE THE DISSERTATION?

A key element in starting your dissertation is to put your ideas on paper. Do not be too concerned with grammar or making complete sense in the early stages. An outline is very useful. Start with a table of contents to give your paper more body. Go back to your outline and table of contents to see how far you are getting. Try to keep a regular schedule of making progress on your dissertation or thesis, even if some days you only work on formatting of pages or spelling checks. Even the small changes will put you closer to your goal of finishing.

Make sure that you have a good support system. Look at the section titled "How do I balance my time between family, friends and studying?"

It can be a political game to negotiate your dissertation or thesis committee. It is vitally important that you choose a dissertation or thesis committee chair who supports you, and other committee members who are supportive of your research project. A good idea is to ask your chairperson for advice on selecting the rest of the committee. At times, it can be frustrating dealing with your dissertation adviser or committee, but remember: stay focused and maintain a steady level of work.

The revision process can be very difficult because you may not agree with all of the committee's suggested changes. It is appropriate to ask committee members to clarify their suggestions, and to discuss the suggested changes with them. However, it is often a good idea to take a 24-hour break from the project after you receive feedback that is particularly upsetting. Read the review again when you feel calm, and try to objectively understand the suggestions. Ultimately, your committee has to sign off on your dissertation and sometimes the suggested changes may make the work more publishable in the long run. Sometimes it is possible to cleverly package the suggested changes so that you feel that you do not have to compromise your perspective while still integrating the feedback.

"I just got back a harsh critique. It is painful. After that headache I still feel that it was worth it."

particularly upsetting. Read the review again when you feel calm, and try to objectively understand the suggestions.

MAINTAINING CHICANO/A STUDIES LIBRARIES

WHY ARE CHICANO/A STUDIES LIBRARIES IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS & FACULTY?

The university library exists to support the needs of departments and students. Librarians are a great resource to turn to for help with your research. Students need to express their needs clearly to the library and librarians in order to gain access to the materials they need.

HOW CAN WE MAINTAIN AND GROW OUR CHICANO/A STUDIES LIBRARIES?

Departments and students can help librarians by making their needs clear. This means that programs and students may have to request new materials from the campus

library when it does not carry the multicultural resources that we need for our research. Librarians need to be aware of the needs of the department. Students, faculty, and librarians also need to push for access to available electronic resources, such as journals and other available references on-line.

"Having access to information is extremely important."

WHAT ELECTRONIC RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

There are several electronic resources available for Chicano/a and Latino/a research. The main databases are:

Chicano Database
Hispanic American Periodical Index (HAPI)
Handbook of Latin American Studies (HLAS)
Ethnic NewsWatch

The *Chicano Database* focuses on all types of material on Mexican-American topics. Since 1992, this database has expanded to include other Latino groups, including Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and Central American immigrants. The *Chicano Database* also includes the Spanish-Speaking Mental Health Database, covering psychological, sociological, and educational literature. Coverage is of books and journal articles from 1967 to the present. The *Hispanic American Periodical Index* searches references to articles about U.S.-Hispanic and Latin American topics from more than 350 scholarly journals worldwide. It also includes book reviews and drama and film reviews. The coverage is from 1970 to the present. The *Handbook of Latin American Studies* searches references and abstracts to books, chapters in books, and journal articles about all aspects of Latin American studies. Many of the indexed publications are published in Latin America. The coverage is from 1935 to the present. *Ethnic NewsWatch* includes full-text articles from the ethnic and minority news presses in America. It covers more than 180 newspapers and magazines, representing African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, Jewish, Native American, Arab American, and European American history and culture. The coverage is from 1990 to the present.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Aguirre, A., et al. *Chicanos in Higher Education: Issues and Dilemmas for the 21st Century* (Asher-Eric Higher Education Report, No. 3, 1993)
- Arturo, Y. *Minorities in Higher Education: Chicanos and Others*. 1982.
- Becker, H.S. *Writing for Social Scientists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Boice, R. *Professors as Writers*. Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press, 1990.
- Gandara, P. *Over the Ivy Walls: The Educational Mobility of Low Income Chicanos* Albany, NY: (SUNY Press Series, Social Context of Education), 1995.
- Caplan, P. *Lifting a Ton of Feathers: A Woman's Guide to Surviving in the Academic World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- Kirsch, G. *Women Writing the Academy*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993.
- Lamott, A. *Bird by Bird*. New York: Pantheon, 1994.
- Moxley and Lenker. *The Politics and Process of Scholarship*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995.
- Padilla, R.V. and Chávez, R. eds. *The Leaning Ivory Tower: Latino Professors in American Universities*. Albany, NY: (SUNY Press Series in Hispanic Studies), 1995
- Strunk, W. & White E.B. *The Elements of Style*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1979.
- Valverde, L.A., & Garcia, S.B. *Hispanics in Higher Education: Leadership and Vision for the Next Twenty-Five Years*. University of Texas at Austin. 1982.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Undergraduate Success

Succeeding in College: www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/programs/undergrad.html

College, Scholarships and Related Information and Links:

www.go2e-hr.com/schools_and_scholarships.htm

Scholarships and Grants: www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3specpop.htm

Graduate School Success

"Getting In: An Applicant's Guide to Graduate Admission": <http://dave.burrell.net/guide/links.html>

A Guide to Getting Into Graduate School: www.csus.edu/indiv/t/tumminia/Grad.htm

Facilitating Post-Secondary Outcomes for Mexican Americans:

www.library.unt.edu/ericscs/vl/colprep/digests/career.htm

Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program: www.ewu.edu/studentserv/mcnair

Gradschools.com: www.gradschools.com

Latinos & Success in Higher Education

Academic success for Latinos: www.sfsu.edu/~cecipp/programs/academic_success.htm

Chicano/a Space: Educational Resources: <http://mati.eas.asu.edu:8421/ChicanArte>

Coalition to Increase Minority Degrees (CIMD): <http://mati.eas.asu.edu>

Mexican American Education : <http://aelvis.ael.org/eric/mexicans.htm>

Mexican American Resources in Education: <http://aelliot.ael.org/~eric/mexican.html>

Links to Mexican American Education Resources: <http://aelliot.ael.org/~eric/othermex.html>

Making Education Work for Mexican Americans:

<http://npin.org/library/pre1998/n00316/n00316.html>

Success in Higher Education: <http://webhost.bridgew.edu/jhayesboh/NOT13TH/not13th.htm>

Funding for Undergraduate and Graduate Education

Ford Foundation: www.fordfound.org

Hispanic Scholarship Fund: www.hsf.net

Social Science Research Council: <http://ssrc.org/fellowships>

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: www.mellon.org/awmpd.html

Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Program: www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/iegps/javits.html

National Science Foundation: www.nsf.gov

Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Program: www.woodrow.org

Gates Scholarship: <http://gmsp.org>

Kellogg Foundation: www.wkkf.org

Hispanic Outlook Scholarships: <http://www.hispanicoutlook.com/scholar.html>

Hispanic Scholarship Fund for Business: <http://hispanicfund.org>

Information and Networking

Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS): www.sacnas.org

National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS): www.naccs.org.

American Psychological Association (APA): www.apa.org

Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU): www.hacu.net

Tomás Rivera Policy Institute: www.trpi.org

Chicano/Latino Net: Networking & Information: <http://cnet.ucr.edu>

Chicana Feminist Homepage: www.chicanas.com

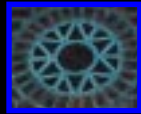
Success in Higher Education: <http://webhost.bridgew.edu/jhayesboh/NOT13th.htm>

Hispanic Resources on diversity in the government: www.doi.gov/diversity/8hispanic.htm

American Association of University Women (ASUW): www.aauw.org

Look for our upcoming website:

"Consejos para su futuro en educación / Suggestions for Your Future in Education"



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