

**A REPORT ON LATINO FORMER STUDENTS OF
NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

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About The Institute for Community And Workforce Development at Northern Essex Community College



The Institute for Community and Workforce Development is a unit within the College's Corporate and Community Education Center. Its mission includes three goals: 1) to help those in the workforce understand experiences and conditions living and working in the Merrimack Valley; 2) to do research that assists in the development and improvement of policy in community and workforce development; and 3) to support and expand the involvement of those individuals in the workforce and business, as well as policy makers, organizers and planners in education/training.

Acknowledgements



The research team wishes to thank the dozens of individuals who gave of their time and personal experiences to make this report possible. All involved had one purpose in doing this work, in opening their lives, and in expressing their thoughts. That purpose was to present the experiences of former Latino students at Northern Essex Community College in a snap shot. While conducting this research and presenting its findings, we were able to clarify some key issues, and de-bunk some negative assumptions about these Latino students.

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Introduction and Research Design

In the spring of 2006 the president's office at Northern Essex Community College (NECC) determined that a review of Latino former students was needed to determine why so many leave the school before completing their education. The concern was to see if structural factors within the school were responsible for their leaving; and if necessary to make changes so that fewer Latinos prematurely leave. The Institute for Community and Workforce Development (ICWD) at the college was asked to conduct the necessary research by mapping-out appropriate methods of data collection, creating survey instruments, and providing analysis.

By the summer of 2006 the ICWD had developed a survey instrument (see Appendix A), organized a bilingual team of researchers, and was given the names and telephone numbers of former full-time Latino students who had dropped out between the fall semesters of 2004 and 2005. The population of potential informants was divided between those Latinos who were in certificate and degree programs, and those in the school's English as a Second Language (ESL) service area. According to the information provided, out of 806 Latinos who were registered in the fall of 2004 in various degree programs, 46.7% (376) returned in the fall of 2005. This meant that 46.7% (377) did not return, with 6.6% (53) of the total graduating by the spring of 2005 semester. For those in ESL the figures were 509 total Latino enrollments in the fall of 2004, with 50.3% (256) returning in the fall of 2005, and 49.7% (253) not returning. It was those Latinos who did not return on which this survey focused.

Of those who were in the College's degree programs and had dropped out, a total of 21% (78) were reached by telephone, and were administered the survey. Former ESL students surveyed totaled 26% (66). While the return rates for each group were relatively small, the researchers felt those included in the study in some ways represented the overall population, that the findings were nevertheless significant, and that the data still provide insights on these groups of Latino former students. Reasons for not reaching 79% of those formerly in degree programs and 74% in the ESL group included a change of telephone number, or having moved out of the area.

Those interviewed spent about 45-60 minutes on the phone answering the survey questions. Interviews were done in either English or Spanish, depending upon the respondents' comfort level. Once collected, the data were entered into a computer, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), software specifically designed for social science

research. The data in this report are frequencies, or simple numbers and percentages for each question and response.

The report is divided into three sections. Part I outlines some basic demographic and economic characteristics of those surveyed. Part II focuses on reasons for leaving NECC, such as whether respondents transferred to another school. Part II also describes students' own opinions of various aspects of their college experience. The third and final section presents some concluding comments, highlighting key trends and their possible explanation. One last note: the data from this survey are presented in all of the tables as "Total" which combines all of those surveyed, "Degree" for those formerly in the College's degree programs, and "ESL" for those in this service area.

Part I: Demographic Profile

The total number of participants in the survey was 144. According to Table 1, of those surveyed 28.5% (41) of Latino students in both degree and ESL programs combined were males, while 71.5% (103) were females for a total of 100% (144). The fact that more females were represented in this survey is consistent with the college’s overall student body. These data on Latino former students highlight the need for NECC to reach out to males to a greater extent. Latino males can represent a much greater student pool from within the Latino community, for the college.

When queried about their age Table 2 demonstrates that among those who responded, 40.3% (58) were between 19-25 years of age, 25.7% (37) were 26-35, and 26.4% (38) were 36 years of age or older. When we look further at the data in Table 2 we find that 60.3% (47) of degree program Latinos were between 19-25 years of age, and 16.7% (11) were in this age bracket among those in ESL. The data in Table 2 seem to indicate that degree programs maintained a larger number of younger Latino students, while the College’s ESL area had a disproportionately older population.

<i>Table 1</i> <i>Sex/Gender</i>			
	Total	Degree Program	ESL
Sex/Gender			
Male	41 (28.5%)	30 (38.5%)	11 (16.7%)
Female	103 (71.5%)	48 (61.5%)	55 (83.3%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

<i>Table 2</i> <i>Age</i>			
Age Group	Total	Degree Program	ESL
19 - 25 Yrs.	58 (40.3%)	47(60.3%)	11 (16.7)
26 - 35 Yrs.	37 (25.7%)	19(24.4%)	18(27.3%)
36 - 45 Yrs.	26 (18.1%)	6 (7.7%)	20(30.3%)
46 or More	12 (8.3%)	2 (2.6%)	10(15.5%)
No Response	11 (7.6%)	4 (5.1%)	7 (10.2%)
Total	144(100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

When looking at ethnicity/national origin, Table 3 shows that of the total, 64.4% (93) were Dominican, and 20.1% (29) were Puerto Rican. Only 8.4% (9) classified themselves as Latino from the United States of America (USA); and 6.9% (10) were classified as “Other.” When we divide the total population between degree program students and ESL there

Ethnicity/ National Origin	Total	Degree	ESL
Dominican	93(64.6%)	4 (51.3%)	53(80.3%)
Puerto Rican	29(20.1%)	26(33.3%)	3 (4.5%)
Latino from USA	9 (8.4%)	7 (10.3%)	2 (3.0%)
Other	10 (6.9%)	4 (5.1%)	8 (12.2%)
Total	144(100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

continues to be a higher number of Dominicans than Puerto Ricans in both categories. The figures show that 51.3% (40) of Dominicans were in degree programs and 80.3% (53) in ESL; while for Puerto Ricans the data showed 33.3% (26) and 4.5% (3) respectively. These figures require us to keep in mind that Lawrence, Massachusetts, where the College maintains a major campus, is at this time predominantly Dominican. Further, the low number of Puerto Ricans in ESL may be attributed to the fact that this group has been in the USA longer than Dominicans in general, allowing the former group ample time to have moved beyond ESL. Finally, it is important to note that Latinos from Puerto Rico’s K-12 public school system are required to master the English language before graduating from high school.

Table 4 presents data on marital status of those interviewed and they indicate that out of the total, 50.7% (73) were single, 35.4% (51) were married, and 11.8% (17) were divorced. Only 2.1% (3) refused to answer this question. These data are consistent with the fact that according to Table 2 above, most of the Latino students surveyed were young (19-25 years old) and were therefore more likely not to have been married.

Status	Total	Degree	ESL
Single	73 (50.7%)	49(62.8%)	24(36.4%)
Married	51 (35.4%)	23(29.5%)	28(42.4%)
Divorced	17 (11.8%)	6 (7.7%)	11(16.7%)
No Response	3 (2.1%)	--	3 (4.5%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

When asked about their employment status, Table 5 shows that 82.6% (119) of the overall number indicated they were working and 13.9% (20) said they were not. Those formerly in the college’s degree programs, and who were employed at the time of this survey, totaled 80.8% (63), while 16.7% (13) noted they were not working. Within the ESL group 84.8% (56) said they were working, and 10.6% (7) noted they were not.

Table 5 Working or Not			
Work Status	Total	Degree	ESL
Yes	119(82.6%)	63(80.8%)	56(84.8%)
No	20 (13.9%)	13(16.7%)	7 (10.6%)
No Response	5 (3.8%)	2 (2.6%)	3 (4.5%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 6, which displays annual income, indicates that 41.7% (60) were making \$20,001-\$45,000. Only .7% (1) was making more than \$45,000 and this individual was from the ESL pool. Looking at both groups combined, the data reveal that 30.6% (44) were making \$20,000 or less. Separately, those within the degree program population accounted for 32.1% (25) making \$20,000 or less, and 44.9% (35) were earning \$20,001-\$45,000. For those formerly in the college’s ESL service area the figures were 28.8% (19), and 39.4% (26) respectively. A total of 25 respondents declined to provide this information.

Table 6 Annual Income			
Income	Total	Degree	ESL
\$10,000 or Less	16 (11.1%)	9 (11.5%)	7 (10.6%)
\$10,001 - \$20,000	28 (19.4%)	16 (20.5%)	12 (18.2%)
\$20,001 - \$30,000	52 (36.1%)	30 (38.5%)	22 (33.3%)
\$30,001 - \$45,000	8 (5.6%)	5 (6.4%)	3 (4.5%)
More Than \$45,000	1 (.7%)	--	1 (1.5%)
N/A, Not Working	13 (9.0%)	8 (10.3%)	5 (7.6%)
No Response	26 (17.4%)	10 (12.8%)	16 (24.2%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

The research team asked about the highest degree or certificate obtained in an attempt to gauge educational level. Table 7 illustrates that, of the total amount, 50% (72) had a high school diploma or GED, Only 4.9% (7) had an Associate’s Degree, and 2.1% 3 had a Bachelor’s Degree. Slightly over thirty-six percent (52) had some college education but had not obtained a degree, according to Table 7. Most of those with only a high school diploma or GED were in the ESL category, while those in degree programs more often had some college experience but no degree, or else a formal degree from an institution of higher education.

Level	Total	Degree	ESL
High School/GED	72 (50%)	30 (38.5%)	42 (63.6%)
Some College/ No Degree	52 (36.1%)	36 (46.2%)	16 (24.2%)
Associates Degree	7 (4.9%)	5 (6.4%)	2 (3.0%)
Bachelors Degree	3 (2.1%)	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.5%)
Grad School/ Professional Degree	3 (2.1%)	3 (3.8%)	--
Other Certification	1 (.7%)	1 (1.3%)	--
No Response	6 (4.2%)	1 (1.3%)	5 (7.6%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Respondents were asked if they had children or not. The research team had a hunch that if there were high numbers of respondents with children, this would help account for the high drop-out rate among Latino students at the college. Table 8 indicates that 49.3% (71) did have children while 45.8% (66) did not, observing both groups combined. The figures for those formerly in degree programs were 38.5% (30) with children, and 59.0% (46) with none. Among the ESL students the figures were 62.1% (41) with children and 30.3% (20) without. The data show that a greater percentage, collectively and separately, did have children.

Response	Total	Degree	ESL
Yes	71 (49.3%)	30 (38.5%)	41 (62.1%)
No	66 (45.8%)	46 (59%)	20 (30.3%)
No Response	7 (4.9%)	2 (2.6%)	5 (6.6%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 9
Number of Children

Number	Total	Degree	ESL
No Children	68 (47.2%)	46(59.0%)	22(33.8%)
1 - 3 Children	64 (44.4%)	27(34.5%)	37(56.1%)
4 or more Children	7 (4.9%)	3 (3.8%)	4 (6.0%)
No Response	5 (3.5%)	2 (2.6%)	3 (4.5%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

prematurely. Thus, the number of children might be used as an indicator for leaving school before realizing one’s educational goal(s). Table 9 indicates that, as a group, 47.2% (68) had no children, 44.4% (64) had 1-3 children, and 4.9% (7) had four or more. Among those formerly in degree programs 59.0% (46) had no children, 34.5% (27) had 1-3 children, and 3.8% (3) had four or more. Within the ESL group, the figures were 33.8% (22) with no children, 56.1% (37) with 1-3, and 6.0% (4) with four or more. Overall, the data indicate that half or more respondents in each category had one or more children. Even when broken down between degree and ESL students the pattern indicates a disproportionate number of those who left school had multiple children.

The research team decided to probe further concerning the family structure of the respondents, especially as it pertained to the number of children among those who had them. It was hypothesized that the higher the number of children the greater the probability that the student would leave

Table 10
Place of Residence

Place	Total	Degree	ESL
Lawrence	99 (68.8%)	48(61.5%)	51(77.3%)
Methuen	16 (11.1%)	10(12.8%)	6 (9.1%)
Haverhill	9 (6.3%)	8 (10.3%)	1 (1.5%)
Lowell	8 (5.6%)	4 (5.1%)	4 (6.1%)
Other In Mass.	5 (3.5%)	4 (5.1%)	1 (1.5%)
No Response	7 (4.9%)	4 (5.1%)	3 (4.5%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

respondents, 61.5% (48) were from Lawrence, 12.8% (10) from Methuen, and 10.3% (8) from Haverhill. The figures for those within the ESL category were 77.3% (51) from Lawrence, 9.1% (6) from Haverhill, and 1.5% (1) from Haverhill.

Most of these former students came from Lawrence proper according to Table 10. In all, 68.8% (99) were from Lawrence, 11.1% (16) from Methuen, and 6.3% (9) were from Haverhill while at NECC. Interestingly, 5.6% (8) came from as far as Lowell and 3.5% (5) from another Massachusetts municipality. Among degree program

Part II: Educational Studies, Experiences at NECC, and Overall Opinions

This section outlines in greater detail programs of study while at NECC, as well as relationships to job or career goals. In addition, respondents' experiences in key areas of the college are explored. The data in this section also indicate student opinions of such areas as faculty, advising, and the school's physical facilities.

We begin this second section by asking respondents if they were working in the field in which they studied while at NECC. Table 11 indicates that among both groups 56.9% (82) said they were presently working in the field they studied at NECC, while 41.0% (59) said they were not. Among those Latinos in degree programs, 21.8% (17) said yes, and 75.6% (59) said no. ESL students said "yes" they were working in the field they studied in 98.5% (65) out of the 66 cases. The data in Table 11 seem to indicate that, among degree program Latinos, not completing their studies at NECC meant that they could not follow their chosen career path. For ESL students, learning English was their major goal, and it seems that whatever skills they acquired while at NECC served them well in their place of employment.

Table 11
Whether or Not They Are Working In Field Studied At NECC

Response	Total	Degree	ESL
Yes	82 (56.9%)	17 (21.8%)	65 (98.5%)
No	59 (41.0%)	59 (75.6%)	--
No Response	3 (2.1%)	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.5%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Probing further, respondents were asked to specify their field of employment, and according to Table 12, 3.5% (5) noted Health/Dental Care, 2.1% (3) Business/Management, and .7% (1) reported being self employed. Most respondents felt this question either was not relevant to them or else they were not working

Table 12
Job Field

Field	Total	Degree	ESL
Health/Dental Care	5 (3.5%)	5 (6.4%)	--
Technical Industry	3 (2.1%)	3 (3.8%)	--
Social Services/Teaching	2 (1.4%)	2 (2.6%)	--
Business/Manage.	3 (2.1%)	3 (3.8%)	--
Own My Business	1 (.7%)	1 (1.3%)	--
Not Applicable/Not Working	127 (88.2%)	62 (79.5%)	65 (98.5%)
No Response	3 (2.1%)	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.5%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

at the time of this survey to garner any response; 88.2% (127) responded as such. When divided between degree and ESL groups, all of the responses were from the former group. That is, nearly all of the ESL respondents, 98.5% (65), indicated the question was not applicable to them or that they were not working at the time.

Table 13
Major at NECC

Major	Total	Degree	ESL
Health Professions, Business, Math	16 (11.1%)	16 (20.5%)	--
Science & Tech.	24 (16.7%)	24 (30.8%)	--
Humanities & Social Sciences	4 (2.8%)	4 (5.1%)	--
Arts	--	--	--
Law & Education	11 (7.6%)	11 (14.1%)	--
General Studies	6 (4.2%)	6 (7.7%)	--
Other/Undeclared	17 (11.8%)	17 (21.8%)	--
ESL	66 (45.8%)	--	66 (100%)
No Response	--	--	--
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 13 demonstrates the specific major while at NECC among those surveyed. It shows that among the 144 total respondents 11.1% (16) were majoring in Health Professions, Business, or Math fields; 16.7% (24) majored Science & Technology, 2.8% (4) were majors in the Humanities & Social Sciences, 7.6% (11) Law & Education, and 4.2% (6) within General Studies. Naturally, all 66 students in the ESL category focused in this area.

The data in Table 14 demonstrate that when asked to state a reason for selecting the particular field of study while at NECC 8.3% (12) noted “Career/Work Related” reasons, 21.5% (31) “Interest in the Field”, 2.8% (4) “To Start My Own Business,” and 4.9% (7) “To Help People.” The rest of the respondents (90) provided an array of reasons, and individually they were beyond the scope of this report. Some stated that they were not sure, or even that this question was not relevant to them.

Table 14
Reason For Selecting Major/Area of Study

Reason	Total	Degree	ESL
Career/Work Related	12 (8.3%)	10 (12.8%)	2 (3.0%)
Interest	31 (21.5%)	26 (33.3%)	5 (7.6%)
To Start My Own Business	4 (2.8%)	4 (5.1%)	--
To Help People	7 (4.9%)	7 (9.0%)	--
Not Sure	8 (5.6%)	8 (10.3%)	--
Other	55 (38.2%)	8 (10.3%)	47 (71.2%)
No Response/NA	27 (18.7%)	15 (19.2%)	12 (18.2%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

The respondents were asked the reason they left NECC before completing their program of study and Table 15 highlights the findings. Under “Total” in Table 15, 16.0% (23) said they left for “Family Reasons,” 19.4% (28) left for “Work Related Reasons,” 14.6% (21) chose to “Transfer to Another School,” and 17.4% (25) noted a “Lack of Money” as their reason for prematurely leaving NECC. Only .7% (1) reported leaving because of a “Poor Relationship with Faculty,” and 6.9% (10) said “It Was Taking Too Long” to finish their

Table 15
Reason for Leaving NECC

Reason	Total	Degree	ESL
Family Reasons	23 (16.0%)	15 (19.2%)	8 (12.1%)
Work Related	28 (19.4%)	7 (9.0%)	21 (31.8%)
Transferred To Another School	21 (14.6%)	18 (23.1%)	3 (4.5%)
Lack of Money	25 (17.4%)	16 (20.5%)	9 (13.6%)
Poor relationship With Faculty	1 (.7%)	--	1 (1.5%)
Taking Too Long	10 (6.9%)	1 (1.3%)	9 (13.6%)
Other	24 (33.6%)	20 (25.6%)	14 (21.2%)
No Response	2 (1.4%)	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.5%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

studies. When we divide the respondents between “Degree” and “ESL” groups the figures are as follows: for degree program participants 19.2% (15) said family reasons, 9.0% (7) worked related, 23.1% (18) transferred to another school, and 20.5% (16) noted a lack of money. Among ESL respondents the figures were: 12.1% (8) family, 31.8% (21) work, 4.5% (3) a transfer, and 13.6% (9), money.

Respondents were also asked to rate their overall experience while at NECC, and Table 16 shows their responses. In the Total category, 17.4% (25) noted it was “Very Good,” 47.9% (69) said it was “Good,” 19.4% (28) said it was “Fair,” and 4.9% (7) said it was “Poor.” Overall, however, the

Experience	Total	Degree	ESL
Very Good	25 (17.4%)	15 (19.2%)	10 (15.2%)
Good	69 (47.9%)	34 (43.6%)	35 (53.0%)
Fair	28 (19.4%)	18 (23.1%)	10 (15.2%)
Poor	7 (4.9%)	3 (3.8%)	4 (6.1%)
No Response	15 (5.6%)	8 (10.3%)	7 (10.6%)
Total	144(100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

majority, 62.3% (94) said their experience at NECC was good-to-very good. From Table 16, it seems that between the two groups the proportion of those rating their overall experience as good-to-very good was roughly the same when comparing the two groups. The figures were: 62.8% (45) for students in Degree Programs, and 68.2% (35) for those in ESL.

When probed further and asked why they assessed their overall experience as such (see Table 16 above), Table 17 shows the response as because “They Treated me Well,” in 22.9% (33) of the cases; 6.9% (10) noted they were “Treated So-So,” and while 3.5% (5) said it was because the faculty treated them “Good,” only .7% (1) noted it was due to “Poor Faculty.” Unfortunately, the majority, 54.2% (78), either could not say, or refused to answer this question.

Reason	Total	Degree	ESL
Treated Me Well	33 (22.9%)	16 (20.5%)	17 (25.8%)
Treated Me So-So	10 (6.9%)	6 (7.7%)	4 (6.1%)
Treated Me Poorly	1 (.7%)	--	1 (1.5%)
Good Faculty	5 (3.5%)	4 (5.1%)	1 (1.5%)
Poor Faculty	1 (.7%)	--	1 (1.5%)
Environment is Bad	3 (2.1%)	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.5%)
Don't Know/Can't Say			
No Response	78 (54.2%)	43 (55.1%)	35 (53.0%)
Refused to Answer	13 (9.0%)	7 (9.0%)	6 (9.1%)
Total	144(100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 18 displays the responses concerning advising while these Latino former students were still matriculating at NECC. In particular, 4.9% (7) felt it was “Very Good,” 25.0% (36) said it was “Good,” 11.1% (16) noted it was “Fair,” and 2.8% (4) said it was “Poor.” A significant number of the respondents, however, could not assess advising at NECC since in 41.7% (60) of cases, they “Never Got Any”. Further, Table 18 illustrates that while 37.2% (29) among degree program participants responded as never having gotten any advising, 47.0% (31) of the ESL students never received advising too. These data indicate an area of deficiency that, if turned around, may keep more Latinos students engaged in higher education at NECC. Table 19 shows a consistent pattern similar to Table 18, with almost half of the respondents surveyed noting “Not Applicable” because of never having gotten any advising.

Table 18			
Assessment of Advising at NECC			
Assessment	Total	Degree	ESL
Very Good	7 (4.9%)	6 (7.7%)	1 (1.5%)
Good	36 (25.0%)	20 (25.6%)	16 (24.2%)
Fair	16 (11.1%)	12 (15.4%)	4 (6.1%)
Poor	4 (2.8%)	3 (3.8%)	1 (1.5%)
Don't Know/Never Got Any	60 (41.7%)	29 (37.2%)	31 (47.0%)
No Response	21 (14.5%)	8 (10.3%)	13 (19.7%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 19			
Reason for Evaluating Advising as Such			
Reason	Total	Degree	ESL
They Helped a Lot	11 (7.6%)	7 (9.0%)	4 (6.1%)
Info. Was Useful	5 (3.5%)	3 (3.8%)	2 (3.0%)
Advisors Knew Very Little	1 (.7%)	1 (1.3%)	--
Not Applicable	60 (41.7%)	29 (37.2%)	31 (47.0%)
No Response	67 (46.5%)	38 (48.7%)	29 (44.9%)
Total	144(100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

In Table 20 the data show that most of those surveyed rated faculty at NECC as “Very Good,” or “Good.” The figures in “Total” were 21.5% (31), and 44.4% (64) respectively. This was 66% (95) of those who participated in the survey. When pressed further and asked why they assessed faculty as such, according to Table 21 respondents in 17.4% (25) of the cases said “They Know the Subject Matter,”

4.2% (6) noted “They Care for the Students,” and 9.0% (13) noted “They Helped Me/Students Out.” One (.7%) noted that they assessed faculty in a negative manner because they “Didn’t Care About Us,” 2.1% (3) said faculty “Treated

Students Poorly, 2.8% (4) noted faculty “Did Not Know the Material,” and 2.1% (3) said they (faculty) “Provided No Help.” The majority, however, 61.9% (80) could not explain why they rated faculty as shown in Table 20. Finally, a quick glance of Table 21 reveals that most of those who assessed faculty negatively were to be found among the ESL students.

Assessment	Total	Degree	ESL
Very Good	31 (21.5%)	18 (23.1%)	13 (19.7%)
Good	64 (44.4%)	33 (42.3%)	31 (47.0%)
Fair	25 (17.4%)	16 (20.5%)	9 (13.6%)
Poor	6 (4.2%)	2 (2.6%)	4 (6.1%)
Don't Know/Can't Say	3 (2.1%)	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.5%)
No Response	15 (10.4%)	7 (9.0%)	8 (12.1%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Reason	Total	Degree	ESL
They Know the Subject Matter	25 (17.4%)	14 (17.9%)	11 (16.7%)
They Care for the Students	6 (4.2%)	4 (5.1%)	2 (3.0%)
They Helped Me/Students Out	13 (9.0%)	9 (11.5%)	4 (6.1%)
Didn't Care About Us	1 (.7%)	1 (1.3%)	--
Treated Students Poorly	3 (2.1%)	1 (1.3%)	2 (3.0%)
Did Not Know the Material	4 (2.8%)	--	4 (6.1%)
Provided No Help	3 (2.1%)	1 (1.3%)	2 (3.0%)
Don't Know/Can't Really Say Why	89 (61.9%)	48 (61.5%)	41 (62.2%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 22 centers around assessment of the College’s physical plant, including, for example, classrooms, labs, and grounds. When we look at the “Total” column, combining both degree program students and those in ESL, we see the majority of the respondents noted the physical facilities as good-to-very good. The combined figure for these two assessment ratings was 75.7% (109). In 7.6% (11) of cases the college’s physical plant was rated as “Fair,” and only 1.4% (2) felt it was “Poor” When pressed to explain why they evaluated NECC’s physical facilities as they did 18.1% (26) noted that it was “Clean, Well Equipped, and Bright” according to Table 23. In 75.0% (108) of the cases respondents could not or would not explain why they rated physical facilities as such.

Assessment	Total	Degree	ESL
Very Good	11 (7.6%)	6 (7.7%)	5 (7.6%)
Good	98 (68.1%)	50 (64.1%)	48 (72.7%)
Fair	11 (7.6%)	9 (11.5%)	2 (3.0%)
Poor	2 (1.4%)	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.5%)
Can't Really Say	5 (3.5%)	4 (5.1%)	1 (1.5%)
No Response	17 (11.8%)	8 (10.3%)	9 (13.6%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Reason	Total	Degree	ESL
Clean, Well Equipped, Bright	26 (18.1%)	13 (16.7%)	13 (19.7%)
Old, Outdated, In Need of Repairs	2 (1.4%)	2 (2.6%)	-
Place is a Dump	1 (.7%)	-	1 (1.5%)
Can't Really Say	108 (75.0%)	60 (76.9%)	48 (72.7%)
No Response	5 (3.5%)	3 (3.8%)	2 (3.0%)
Missing Value	2 (1.3%)	-	2 (3.0%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

The research team felt it important to ask these former students directly whether or not being Latino at NECC made things difficult. It was argued that feeling uncomfortable, for example, might be a determinant as to why they left without completing their studies. Table 24 shows that only 14.6% (21) noted that being Latino made things more difficult at NECC. The majority, however, felt that being Latino did not make things more difficult. The figure for the latter group was 77.1% (111). When broken down into the two categories of students, we find that both groups (Former Degree and ESL students) were comparable in number and percentage for each response according to Table 24.

Table 24
Whether Being Latino Made Things Difficult at NECC

Response	Total	Degree	ESL
Yes	21 (14.6%)	11 (14.1%)	10 (15.2%)
No	111 (77.1%)	62 (79.5%)	49 (74.2%)
Can't Say	12 (8.3%)	5 (6.4%)	7 (10.6%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Pressed to explain why they felt being Latino at NECC made things more difficult, 15 of the 21 students who made such an assessment responded by saying that overall the school “Treats Latinos Poorly.” Table 25 demonstrates these data as follows: .7% (1) felt there is/was a “Hostile Environment,” 4.9% (7) asserted it “Takes Too Long to Finish,” .7% (1) “Never Felt Welcomed,” and 4.2% (6) noted the school “Treat Latinos Poorly.”

Table 25
If "Yes" Explain How

Explanation	Total	Degree	ESL
Hostile Atmosphere	1 (.7%)	--	1 (1.5%)
Takes Too Long to Finish	7 (4.9%)	5 (6.4%)	2 (3.0%)
Never Felt Welcomed	1 (.7%)	--	1 (1.5%)
Treat Latinos Poorly	6 (4.2%)	3 (3.8%)	3 (4.5%)
No Response/ Not Applicable	129(90.6%)	70(89.7%)	59(89.4%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Respondents were asked if they were attending another school at the time of this survey, and 24.3% (35) said yes, while 70.1% (101) said no according to Table 26. Those who were attending another school were pressed further, and asked what institution were they attending, and Table 27 shows that: 1.4% (2) were going to another community college, 3.5% (5) were attending UMASS Lowell, 6.3% (9) were at Cambridge College, and 12.5% (18) were scattered throughout other schools. When we look closer to Table 27, we find that the majority of students, 29.5% (23) attending another school were formerly in NECC's degree programs. Finally, Table 28 shows how many of these students who attended another school had graduated from them, and the data shows that 2.8% (4) did finish, while 23.6% (34) had not finished.

Table 26 Went to Another School			
Response	Total	Degree	ESL
Yes	35 (24.3%)	24 (30.8%)	11 (16.7%)
No	101 (70.1%)	50 (64.1%)	51 (77.3%)
No Response	8 (5.6%)	4 (5.1%)	4 (6.0%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 28 Graduated From Second School?			
Response	Total	Degree	ESL
Yes	4 (2.8%)	2 (2.6%)	2 (3.0%)
No	34 (23.6%)	23 (29.5%)	11 (16.7%)
Not Applicable	100 (69.4%)	52 (66.7%)	48 (73.7%)
No Response	6 (4.2%)	1 (1.3%)	5 (7.6%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 27 School Transferred To			
School	Total	Degree	Total
Another Community College	2 (1.4%)	2 (2.6%)	–
UMASS Lowell	5 (3.5%)	5 (6.4%)	–
Cambridge College	9 (6.3%)	3 (3.8%)	6 (9.1%)
Other	18 (12.5%)	13 (16.7%)	5 (7.6%)
Not Applicable	99 (68.8%)	49 (62.8%)	50 (75.8%)
No Response	11 (7.6%)	6 (7.7%)	5 (7.6%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

A major area of concern for college administrators, as well as for students and their families, is that of financial aid. For this reason, the research team asked respondents if, while at NECC, they received financial assistance from or through the school. Table 29 indicates that 79.2% (114) had received financial assistance, while 12.5% (18) had not received any help. Table 29 also demonstrates that proportionately more ESL students received assistance than those in the degree programs. The figures were 84.5% (56) and 74.4% (58) respectively. Latino students who did receive financial assistance were further asked if they felt the aid was adequate, and Table 30 indicates that 69.4% (100) said it was enough, while 9.0% (13) said it was not sufficient.

Table 29 Received Financial Aid At NECC			
Response	Total	Degree	ESL
Yes	114 (79.2%)	58 (74.4%)	56 (84.8%)
No	18 (12.5%)	15 (19.2%)	3 (4.5%)
No Response	12 (8.3%)	5 (6.4%)	7 (10.6%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 30 Was Financial Aid at NECC Adequate?				
Response	Total	Degree	ESL	
Yes	100 (69.4%)	49 (62.8%)	51 (77.3%)	
No	13 (9.0%)	9 (11.5%)	4 (6.1%)	
No Response	31 (21.6%)	20 (25.6%)	11 (16.7%)	
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)	

Respondents were asked if, while at NECC, faculty and staff, in their opinion, were friendly. Table 31 shows that 79.9% (115) said yes faculty and staff were friendly, 3.5% (5) said no they were not. Review by degree program and ESL categories comparatively shows that a proportionate higher number of the former felt faculty and staff were friendly. The figures were 82.1% (64) and 77.3% (51) respectively. Pressed further by asking more specifically if, as a Latino student, they felt NECC as a whole was friendly, Table 32 indicates that 81.3% (117) felt it was, while 4.1% (6) noted it was not friendly. Finally, for those who noted NECC was not friendly to Latinos the research team asked why they felt as such, and Table 33 indicates that 1.4% (2) felt they were “Hostile Toward Us,” and .7% (1) noted there was “Not Much Happening for Latinos.”

Table 31 Were Faculty and Staff Friendly At NECC?			
Response	Total	Degree	ESL
Yes	115 (79.9%)	64 (82.1%)	51 (77.3%)
No	5 (3.5%)	1 (1.3%)	4 (6.1%)
No Response	24 (16.7%)	13 (16.7%)	11 (16.7%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Table 32 As a Latino(a) is NECC Friendly?				
Response	Total	Degree	ESL	
Yes	117 (81.3%)	64 (82.1%)	53 (80.3%)	
No	6 (4.1%)	3 (3.8%)	3 (4.5%)	
No Response	21 (14.6%)	11 (14.1%)	10 (15.1%)	
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)	

Table 33
If Not Friendly, Why Not?

Response	Total	Degree	ESL
Hostile Toward Us	2 (1.4%)	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.5%)
Not Much Happening for Latinos	1 (.7%)	1 (1.3%)	--
Not Applicable	115 (79.9%)	76 (97.4%)	39 (59.1%)
No Response	26 (18.0%)	--	26 (39.4%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

The survey concluded by asking respondents overall what areas they felt needed improvement at NECC. Table 34 shows that 4.9% (7) felt it needed to “Make ESL Shorter,” 1.3% (2) suggested the school should “Have More Latino Activities,” another .7% (1) noted there was “Too Much Academics and a Need for Skills Training,” .7% (1) mentioned the need to “Offer Credit Courses While Taking ESL,” and 3.5% (5) said “The School Should Treat Us Better.” The vast majority, 88.9% (128), had no response according to Table 34.

Table 34
Overall Areas for Improvement

Suggestions	Total	Degree	ESL
Make ESL Shorter	7 (4.9%)	1 (1.3%)	6 (9.1%)
Have More Latino Activities	2 (1.3%)	2 (2.6%)	--
Too Much Academics, a Need for Skills Training	1 (.7%)	1 (1.3%)	--
Offer Credit Courses While Taking ESL	1 (.7%)	1 (1.3%)	--
Treat Us Better	5 (3.5%)	3 (3.8%)	2 (3.0%)
No Response	128 (88.9%)	70 (89.7%)	58 (87.9%)
Total	144 (100%)	78 (100%)	66 (100%)

Conclusion

This review of former Latino students, in both degree programs and ESL classes, at Northern Essex Community College (NECC) has revealed several major demographic characteristics. Among them is that these students tend to be young, especially in degree programs as compared to those in ESL. Further, approximately 50% of them were single; and about half had children. Most were working, and in 40% of the cases had an annual income from \$20,001 to \$45,000. The bulk of these Latino students, about 69%, came from Lawrence.

When we looked at the data concerning both their educational and personal experiences, as well overall assessments of key sectors of the College, we find some significant patterns. Prominent among them are:

- Over 55% of these Latino former students were working in the field they study while at NECC.
- The largest number (21.5%) chose their specific field of study while at NECC because of “Interest in the Field.”
- Major reasons for leaving NECC before completing their studies were “Family Reasons,” “Work Related Reasons,” and “Lack of Money.”
- Only 7% of the respondents said “It was Taking Too Long.”
- Overall, over 60% of the respondents noted their experience at NECC as good-to-very good.
- The major reason for rating their experience at NECC as good-to-very good was that “They Treated Me Well.”
- A sizeable number (about 42%) said they never received any type of advising while at NECC.
- Over 65% of these Latino former students, when asked to rate the college faculty, noted they were good-to-very good.
- Over 75% felt the College’s physical plant was good-to-very good.
- The majority (77%) felt that being Latino did not make things at NECC more difficult.
- About 15% of the Latinos in this survey believed that being Latino did make things more difficult; and the major reason was that faculty and staff “Treat Latinos Poorly.”
- About 24% were attending another school; and most were going to various four year programs.
- Approximately 80% received some sort of financial assistance; and proportionately these students were mainly in ESL.
- About 69% of those who received financial aid noted that it was enough.
- About 80% of the respondents said that faculty and staff were friendly toward them.

While overall the assessment of these Latino former students was positive toward the college, some key points need to be highlighted. First, leaving school for family and work related reasons is consistent with national trends among Latinos. Research has shown that among Latinos and Whites barriers to college differs. According to Table 35, while Whites cited “Staying Close to Family” as a major reason in 15% of the cases, Latinos noted this as a reason 33% of the time. In reference to work, Whites in Table 35 mentioned “Need to Work and Earn Money” in 73% of the cases, and for Latinos the figure was 79%.¹

Table 35
Percent Latinos and Whites Who Say That Each of The Following are Major Reasons Why People Do Not Enroll/Graduate From College*

Reason	Latinos (n=1,508)	Whites (n=1,193)
Cost of Tuition	78%	81%
Staying Close to Family	33%	15%
Poor High School Education	59%	64%
Discrimination	40%	13%
Need to Work & Earn Money	79%	73%
Feels Does Not Needing Education	48%	31%

* Source: Rodriguez and Friedrich, 2006

While family and work related reasons weigh heavily on rationale for leaving school prematurely, to place responsibility for leaving on the student’s shoulders exclusively is misguided. The fact is that the college may bear some responsibility too. Specifically, data in this report have demonstrated that a sizeable number of the respondents never received any form of advising. Perhaps if they had received advising, both academically and more “personal” in nature, many of these Latinos would have remained enrolled. The need is not for strictly academic advising when it comes to Latinos, but also for a more personal connection to help manage the forces of family and work that loom heavily on these students’ shoulders. Perhaps, had advisors known of some of these crucial issues in the lives of the Latino students surveyed, they may have provided alternatives prior to the students’ decision to leave which may have helped them to remain in school.

The data show how positive Latino students feel about NECC. Viewed at face value this positive assessment seems to be strong. Recent events, however, such as the College’s experience to acquire property in Lawrence for a new campus, reveal a strong sense of anger, distrust, and dislike by many Latinos in the community. Data in this report reveal that 15 out of 21 students who assessed the college negatively felt that Latinos are treated

¹ See Tomas D. Rodriguez and Allison Friedrich, “Latinos, Whites & Perceived Barriers to College Attainment,” *The Hispanic Outlook*, Vol. 16 No. 14 (April 24, 2006), pgs. 9-11.

poorly (see page 15). While it may seem a small number, 15 per year eventually amount to a sizable number after a few years. This also does not take into account the number of family members and friends who hear the negative issues, increasing the number of those who may view the college in a similar fashion.

While in our survey most respondents assessed faculty and staff positively, many in the community feel otherwise, and seem to contradict this survey's findings. One possible reason for such a contradiction is that, since these Latinos in our survey are first generation college students within their families, they have no other school, faculty, and staff to compare with. For what seems positive treatment to these students may not be perceived so well if they had some comparable experiences.

Overall, the general objectives of this research were met. A demographic profile of who these Latino former students are was provided. Their experiences were for the most part positive while at NECC; and faculty and staff are generally viewed in good light. Key structural areas have been assessed, and some have been shown in need of attention. In sum, while NECC has areas in need of attention, and should look for ways to keep Latinos engaged with school, the school in general can nevertheless be proud of how it fared among these students.

Appendix A
Institute for Community and Workforce Development
Northern Essex Community College
Former Latino Student Survey
Dr. Jorge Santiago, Director and PI

Case No. _____

Interviewed By: _____

I. Basic Demographic and Economic Information

1. Sex/Sexo: ___1. Male/Hombre ___2. Female/Mujer

2. Age/Edad: _____

3. National Origin:

___1. Dominican

___2. Puerto Rican

___3. Ecuadorian

___4. Cuban

___5. Latino, but born in the USA

___6. Other

4. Marital Status: ___1. Single ___2. Married ___3. Divorced/Widow(a)

5. Are you currently working? ___1. Yes ___2. No

6. Tell me, in what category does your annual income fall under?

___1. \$10,000 or less

___2. \$10,000-\$20,000

___3. \$20,001-\$30,000

___4. \$30,001-\$45,000

___5. More than \$45,000

___6. N/A, I'm not working

___9. No Response

7. What is your current educational level?

___1. High School Diploma/GED

___2. Some college, but no degree

___3. Associate Degree

___4. Bachelors Degree

___5. Graduate/Professional Degree

___6. Certificate

___9. No Response

8. Do you have children? ___1. Yes ___2. No

If yes, how many? _____

9. What city or town do you now live in? Specify: _____

10. If you are working, is it in the field you studied at NECC? ___1. Yes ___2. No

If yes, what field is that? _____

II. Experiences At NECC

10. While at NECC, what was your major? Specify: _____

11. Why did you focus in this area? Specify reason(s):

12. According to our records, you left NECC before finishing and graduating. Why?

13. If you are now working, are you working in the field you studied at NECC?

- 1. Yes 2. No
- 3. Not Applicable
- 9. No Response

14. How would you evaluate your overall experience at NECC?

- 1. Very Good 2. Good
- 3. Fair 4. Poorly
- 5. Don't Know 9. No Response

Why would you evaluate your experience at NECC as such?

15. How would you evaluate advising services that were provided to you while at NECC (by faculty or staff)?

- 1. Very Good 2. Good
- 3. Fair 4. Poorly
- 5. Don't Know/Never Got Any
- 6. No Response

Why would you evaluate advising at NECC as such?

16. How would you evaluate the overall performance of the faculty while you were at NECC?

- 1. Very Good 2. Good
- 3. Fair 4. Poorly
- 5. Don't Know/Can't Say
- 9. No Response

Why would you evaluate the faculty at NECC as such?

16. How would you evaluate the physical plant (buildings, classrooms, gym, etc.) while you were at NECC?

- 1. Very Good 2. Good
- 3. Fair 4. Poorly
- 5. Don't Know/Can't Say
- 9. No Response

Why would you evaluate the physical plant at NECC as such?

17. While at NECC, did you find that being a Latino(a) made things more difficult for you? 1. Yes 2. No

If yes, how so? _____

18. When you left NECC, did you go and attend another college or university?

- 1. Yes 2. No

If yes, what school? _____

19. Have you graduated from this other school? 1. Yes 2. No

20. While at NECC, did you receive financial aid? 1. Yes 2. No

If yes, was it adequate to meet the cost of attending NECC? 1. Yes 2. No

21. While at NECC, did you find faculty and staff friendly? 1. Yes 2. No

If no, tell me why not:

22. As a Latino(a), did you find NECC a friendly place? 1. Yes 2. No

If no, tell me why not:

III. Areas of Improvement and Suggestions

23. What would you suggest to improve the experiences of Latinos(as) at NECC?

24. In what areas if any, would you suggest changes be made at NECC?

25. Do you have any other suggestions for improving the College? _____

Thank you for your time and responses!