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November 7, 2006

Secretary Margaret Spellings  
c/o Wendy Macias  
U.S. Department of Education  
P.O. Box 33184  
Washington, DC 20033-3184

Dear Secretary Spellings:

*Excelencia* in Education's aim is to accelerate Latino student success in higher education. We focus on institutional practices and educational policies that most directly affect Latinos students and the institutions where they enroll. Financial aid policies and practices have a dramatic impact on if and how Latino students pursue college.

Enclosed please find a copy of the report, ***How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid 2003-04*** that underscores this point. Our analysis of the participation of Latino students in financial-aid programs based on the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) dataset for the 2003-04 academic year released by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center on Education Statistics in February 2005 found that

- Federal financial aid has been a critical source of aid for Latino undergraduates. In 2003-04, **50 percent of Latino undergraduates received federal aid, while only 16 percent of Latino undergraduates received state aid and 17 percent received institutional aid.**
- **While Latino students were more likely to receive federal aid (50 percent) than the combination of all racial/ethnic groups (46 percent) in 2003-04.** Only African American students were more likely to receive federal aid (62 percent). **However, Latinos received the lowest average federal aid awards of any racial/ethnic group.** The average federal aid award for Latinos was \$5,415, while for whites the average award was \$6,230, for African Americans it was \$6,145, and for Asians it was \$5,995.

You have the opportunity to address the issue of financial aid in the upcoming *discussions* about the Pell grant and to address student loan repayment in the upcoming negotiated rulemaking process, announced in the Federal Register on August 18.

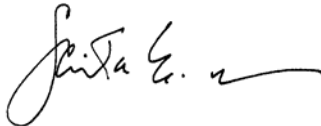
Proposed changes offered by the Project on Student Debt

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First, I ask you to invest in our young people by increasing the maximum award amount for Pell grants to better align them with the real costs of college. Second, I ask you to address student loan repayment in the upcoming negotiated rulemaking process by incorporating the changes offered in the five-point plan developed through the Project on Student Debt.

Should you or your staff have any questions or wish to discuss any other these issues please feel free to reach me via e-mail at [sbrown@edexcelencia.org](mailto:sbrown@edexcelencia.org) or by calling our office

Sincerely yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarita E. Brown", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sarita E. Brown  
President

Attachment