



Rebecca C. Villarreal, Ph.D. to Head Education Grantmaking Team

We are excited to announce that Rebecca Villarreal has joined Great Lakes Community Investments division as Director of Education Grantmaking. Villarreal brings with her a wealth of experience in higher education philanthropy. She is passionate about helping students from underrepresented populations gain access to high-quality postsecondary education and succeed through graduation.

"I'm excited to have Rebecca bring her experience and expertise to my team," said Amy Kerwin, Vice President Community Investments. She is well-known and respected as a relationship builder and collaborator among higher education funders, researchers and practitioners. And as a first-generation college graduate, she brings an important perspective to this work.

Villarreal arrives at Great Lakes from The Kresge Foundation where she has served as an Education Program Officer for the past three years. Previously, she held administrative, teaching and research positions at the Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities and the University of Maryland, College Park. Villarreal holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, both in Education Policy Leadership, from the University of Maryland, College Park. She was also a graduate fellow with *Excelencia* in Education, a nonprofit organization dedicated to Latino student success.



New Project Addresses Unique Needs of Adult Latino Students

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, fewer than one in four Latino adults has a college degree, compared to 43% of their white peers. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) are integral to helping more Latinos earn credentials and advance in their careers. *Excelencia in Education* and the *Council for Adult and Experiential Learning* (CAEL) recently **joined forces to increase degree completion** among Latino adult students at 15 HSIs in regions including California, Florida, Texas and Wisconsin. Over the next three years, the colleges will use CAEL's **Adult Learner 360** diagnostic tool to identify and implement improved support services for adult learners, and staff will participate in the CAEL Adult Learner 360 Academy. Funding for this project is provided by Great Lakes, The Kresge Foundation and Greater Texas Foundation. For more information, read this article in *The Hechinger Report*.

INCREASING ATTAINMENT AMONG STUDENTS WITH SOME COLLEGE, BUT NO DEGREE.

Degrees When Due Initiative Aims to Boost Completion Rates

Nearly 4 million students nationwide have completed at least two years of college credits but have yet to earn an associate's degree, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. **Degrees When Due**, an initiative from the *Institute for Higher Education Policy*, is helping postsecondary institutions implement research-based strategies to re-engage stopped-out students and award associate degrees to students with enough credits. Supported by Great Lakes, The Kresge Foundation, Lumina Foundation and ECMC Foundation, the project launched last month with institutions in eight states and will expand to 32 states within three years.

Colleges will learn how to identify students already eligible for degrees and how to support students who are just a few credits shy of completion, resulting in as many as 500,000 new graduates. A recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, **What's the Value in Helping Students Reclaim Their Degrees?**, questions how reclaimed degrees will make a difference in students' lives. Great Lakes dollars support the project's research component to evaluate its impact on students' educational and employment outcomes.



New Report: Textbook-Free Degrees Increase Access to Affordable Learning

Community college students can expect to spend up to \$1,300 per year on textbooks, or about one-third of their total college expenses. This can put a strain on already tight budgets and become a significant barrier for students from low-income households. That's why we made a grant to support Achieving the Dream's **Open Educational Resources (OER) Degree Initiative**—the largest project of its kind to develop community college degree programs using open educational resources such as openly licensed texts and other digital media instead of traditional textbooks. Now in its second year, the OER Degree Initiative published a **new report** that expands on earlier findings with promising news about increased OER course enrollment and significant savings for students.