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**THE TOMÁS RIVERA POLICY INSTITUTE PINPOINTS BEST PRACTICES  
AT CALIFORNIA NURSING SCHOOLS TO INCREASE POOL OF  
MINORITY NURSES**

**Policy brief reveals practical methods schools can adopt to tackle  
roadblocks Latinos face entering the field to help ease nursing shortage and  
improve health care for all**

**Los Angeles, CA** – Nursing schools that take specific and targeted strides to attract more Latinos into the profession would help check California’s troubling shortage of nurses and improve health care for minority patients.

A policy brief released today by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) outlines how institutions can attract and keep more Latino nursing students as well as pave the way for more Latino leadership in health care.

“Latinos are one of the fastest-growing, largest and youngest minority groups in California, yet they make up less than 5 percent of registered nurses,” TRPI President and CEO Dr. Harry P. Pachon said. “One of the best ways to stem the nursing shortage is to get more minorities interested in the field. There are nursing programs out there that do this well, and we hope our efforts to uncover and analyze their strategies will convince others to take similar steps.”

The analysis is based on TRPI research of barriers minority students face in attending and completing nursing school. A mix of family, financial, social, and cultural roadblocks can conspire to thwart even the most determined student.

“Latinos very much want to be nurses and the nursing students we spoke with displayed a drive and dedication to the field that was inspiring.” said study author Hayley Buchbinder, MPP, MPH. “Still, the barriers these students reported facing were disheartening. Nursing school is rigorous enough without additional burdens on student time and focus. Many Latino students are turned away by barriers such as long wait lists or discouragement from counselors and educators. There is much that nursing schools can do to address these barriers, but policymakers and other key players must do their part as well.”

The policy brief uncovers methods, for example, to allay the reluctance in the Latino community to access financial aid from the time a student is considering post-

secondary education to completing the final semester of nursing school. Developing ties to local high schools, tailoring programs for working students, and providing strong student services are among other exemplary practices TRPI found at selected nursing programs.

Movement in this direction will help alleviate disparities in the quality of health care for minority and non-minority populations – differences that experts say cannot be explained by insurance status and income.

“A healthy side effect of increasing the number of Latino nurses will be improved access and quality of care for underserved minority patients in this state,” Dr. Pachon said.

The policy brief, made possible with an educational grant from AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals, includes examples of challenges faced by nursing students. It may be downloaded here: [http://www.trpi.org/PDFs/nursing\\_brief.pdf](http://www.trpi.org/PDFs/nursing_brief.pdf).

Findings are based on a study funded by The California Wellness Foundation and released in April 2007. The full report may be accessed here: <http://www.trpi.org/PDFs/nursing.pdf>.

### **About TRPI**

Founded in 1985, the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) advances informed policy on key issues affecting Latino communities through objective and timely research contributing to the betterment of the nation. TRPI is an affiliated research unit of the University of Southern California School of Policy, Planning, and Development and is associated with the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy at Columbia University.

Website: <http://www.trpi.org>