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### **Promoting Higher Education Among Latino Students**

As a Latina at The Catholic University of America, I see the dire need to promote higher education among Latino students beginning not in high school but in middle school. In middle school and high school I remember being one of few Latinos, if not the only, sitting in GT/Honors/AP courses. I remember thinking it was embarrassing, not for me, but for the Latino student body because Latino students have just as much potential as students of other races. As I sit in lecture at CUA, I still see the same pattern which only reinforces the reality of the problem.

For those of you who have children, you know very well that your children have different needs. They need to be nurtured, taught, and even disciplined in different ways. The same concept applies for students. I am not saying Latino students need special help but they do need special attention. Teachers, administrators and guidance counselors need to be equally concerned for all their students just like parents are equally concerned about the well being of their children. If you have one child that needs special attention you provide it without neglecting your other children because you are able to strike a balance. Schools in the county have not been able to strike this balance between all their students and the evidence is clear when you look around in Honors/AP classes.

School is where the foundation of the rest of your life is built and if you don't have a good foundation your future looks pretty grim. I think this is the case with many Latino students. In school they may feel like they don't get enough enrichment or they aren't encouraged enough or it doesn't make a difference if they pass with an A or a D because they aren't going to college. If from early on the school addresses the special attention the Latino student body requires I sincerely believe that will increase the number of Latino students in Honor/GT/AP courses and in the long run help the Hispanic population merge more easily into mainstream society. At the same time, this will help eliminate any stigma that being smart and getting good grades is "uncool" and "nerdy".

The Latino community is a troubled one socioeconomically and culturally. It is not necessary for me to list all the problems the Latino community is facing for you to understand the gravity of the issue because you hear about it on the news and you can see it in the classroom. We are not in this country to fill vacancies. We are not all destined to walk in the foot steps of our parents. We have the right to equal opportunities and this means the equal opportunity to continue on to higher education. The school system is equipped to provide such opportunities and well suited to prepare us to reach those opportunities. The system has realized that the Latino student body is facing academic struggles. Whether it is increasing parent involvement and awareness or flagging students who are doing poorly academically something must be done to motivate these students so they can become successful, thriving adults.