

Conference promotes college to Hispanic students



By Theresa Gutierrez

March 9, 2006 - A rally is underway promoting higher education among Hispanic students in the Chicago area. It's part of a national leadership conference taking place in Chicago right now.

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The 24th Annual National Latino Leadership Conference put on by the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute promotes education, leadership and unity. It allows high school students throughout Illinois, Indiana and Michigan to learn about education opportunities and to be recruited by universities and colleges. For many, it is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

They were bused in from across the Midwest, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, various Chicago suburbs. Over 3,000 high school students anxious to learn about how to get a college education. Of course, some of them had to be convinced that college is the right way to go.

"All of you will be having an incredible opportunity here today to really make your future dreams a reality," said Ald. Manny Flores, 1st Ward-(D).

The students attended workshops to learn about their options.

"You get a chance to get to know other colleges and new people," said Joel Lechuga, student.

"It really motivated me to continue school and move on to college," said America Paniagua, student.

"I think that it's good for us to learn more about the future," said Melva Douglas, student.

Carlos Ojeda is a professor on the east coast. A high school teacher once called him the greatest piece of garbage he had ever seen. In high school he failed every subject. He turned his life around and overcame many obstacles. Now he motivates young people to get a higher education.

"Don't ever, ever tell anyone tell you who you are or who you will become because it's your destiny to feel, no one else's," said Ojeda.

"It inspired me a lot," said Carlos Rodriguez, student.

The college recruitment fair is one of the largest in the nation, representing over 1,000 colleges and universities across the country who will talk to students about their respective schools, degrees offered, and ways to finance their college education

"I'm more or less seeing other opportunities that I have. I saw other scholarship opportunities that were out there and it's very helpful," said Laura Paramo, student.

"If you want to go to college, what you need to begin doing now, not after you graduate but now while you're in school. Then if you want to apply, how do you apply? Where do you apply? How do you choose a college? And most importantly, how would you finance your public education?" said Juan Andrade, United States Hispanic Leadership Institute.

Andrade went on to say that the number one reason Latinos do not attend college is because they do not have access to the information they need to know how to apply, and the most common

reason given for Latinos not completing college was affordability. He hopes that the conference enables students to take control of their circumstances, instead of being controlled by them.

You can see the ABC7 report by clicking on the video icon above. You will need Windows Media Player 9 or higher to view this video. You can get it [FREE by clicking here](#). **NOTE: Video clips will only be available for 5-days from the date they were created. ALSO: Video clips will play in a separate window on Mac OS X machines, you may also see a video help screen.**