

Hispanic Needs Assessment Field Study

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Executive Summary

The Hispanic population in South Carolina has tripled in the last ten years, creating new challenges and opportunities for Hispanics and the communities in South Carolina where they reside. In order to identify the major issues arising from the population influx, a needs assessment using focus groups was conducted with both Hispanic and non-Hispanic community and business leaders.

Many issues emerged during the group meetings. Hispanics identified problems obtaining social security cards, driver's licenses, health insurance, bank accounts, and a college education. Transportation was a recurring concern impairing the ability to get to places such as work, school, banks, and English classes.

Although there were many challenges identified, opportunities for Hispanics to succeed in South Carolina also emerged. Many Hispanics expressed the desire to open their own small businesses in their local communities. Also, they articulated an interest in furthering their education and in becoming more organized as a community.

The following report provides an overview and analysis of the needs identified by several Hispanic communities in South Carolina. Business, government, and community leaders will receive a copy of this report. We hope that the findings and recommendations outlined in this study will benefit the Hispanic and non-Hispanic communities in South Carolina, and be used as a model for further studies in South Carolina and the United States.

Background

In the last ten years, the United States has experienced a dramatic increase in the Hispanic population. Hispanics are defined as individuals of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture and origin, regardless of race (Dept. of Health & Environmental Control Office of Minority Health Study, 2000). The Hispanic-American community is the fastest growing minority group in the United States. The Hispanic population nationwide increased from 22.4 million in 1990 to 30.3 million in 1998 (equivalent to one in ten Americans), a gain of 35.2 or 7.9 million people. It is estimated that Latinos will constitute the largest minority group in the United States by the year 2010. In South Carolina, the Hispanic population is comprised of people deriving from 12 different countries of origin, the largest three being Puerto Rico, Colombia, and Mexico. Approximately 50 percent of that population is of Mexican descent, (Arpan presentation. May 15, 2001). From 1991-1998, immigrants from Mexico alone accounted for 15.4 percent of total immigrant admissions to South Carolina, (FAIR-LEGAL Immigration to SC, www.fairus.org). The Hispanic influx has brought both benefits and challenges to the United States and South Carolina, and the extraordinary growth in both the population and disposable income has raised many new societal issues.

In the last decade, the Latino population in South Carolina has grown by nearly 78, (Health study, 5). This rapid increase, described by national and local media, has increased awareness of the challenges this growing community faces within our society. "One of the reasons they come here is economic growth. And the construction boom." (Yvonne Simpson, VP of Greenville Chamber of Commerce). Although there is much

concern regarding immigration in the United States, current legislation has proven to be more of a hindrance than help. According to an article by Cyrus D. Mehta, there are thousands, or possibly millions, of undocumented immigrants in the United States. While these immigrants may not be highly skilled, they are essential to many sectors of the economy. As noted by several focus group/town meeting participants, the illegal status of workers puts them at risk for exploitation. Mehta quoted statistics from the US Bureau of Labor, which indicated by 2008 there will be over five million more jobs than people to fill them. How is the issue of undocumented workers who are available to meet the coming US labor shortage being addressed by the U.S. Government? One of the proposals is a provision within the Legal Immigration Equity Act (Life), known as the 245(i) adjustment. This provision would enable undocumented workers to apply for their labor certification sponsored by their employer, which, if approved, would change their alien status. While, on the surface, this provision of the LIFE Act appears promising, there are several troubling components. For one, the labor certification process is backlogged, with the INS being one to three years behind. Once an undocumented worker asks for his/her employer to sponsor them in the labor certification process, the employer becomes officially aware of the undocumented status. By enabling them to legally work within the economy, both employer and worker can operate with trust and integrity. Possible remedies to these obstacles in an otherwise well-intentioned provision include expediting backlogged visas, expanding employment visas, and developing new legalization programs. The registry for legal immigration into the United States is frozen at 1972—this registry date could be advanced to include more of the undocumented population (Mehta, 2001).

Low educational attainment is one of the more serious problems. The median educational level for adult Hispanic immigrants is only six years. Hispanic children do poorly on standardized tests during the early grades. Of 25 Latino children tested, only 17 were ready for the next grade (Arpan presentation. May 15, 2001). A program in Lexington 1 has been set up to teach Hispanic children basic English words and phrases in preparation for school, (King, 2001). As this program progresses, it should be monitored and the results shared with interested districts in South Carolina.

There has been much debate as to whether or not state agencies should provide services in Spanish. Helena Oliviero, a staff writer for Knight Ridder newspapers, recently wrote that despite the growing Hispanic population, not all state agencies have standard policies for residents who do not speak English. The Department of Motor Vehicles is at the top of this list, with many health care centers and banks following closely behind.

Small businesses run by Hispanics have made an impact on the economy in the United States, as well. While all U.S. firms grew by only 26 in the 1990's, Latino businesses grew by 76, (Torres, 1997). Along with this growth, the disposable income of Hispanics has increased astoundingly by 118. Hispanic businesses and their owners have managed to obtain this level of success with very little governmental help (Arpan presentation. May 15, 2001). Cultural attitudes, such as a desire for independence and reliance on family for business support, have made Latinos reluctant to depend on governmental assistance. Consequently, Hispanic- owned businesses have created positive business ties with Mexico favoring the strong relationships to cultural roots.

An article in The State entitled "Few Hispanics voting in S.C., records show" states that only 0.5 of South Carolina's 2,000,000 registered voters, or 8,883, are Hispanic (Baca, 2001). The article goes on to state "many Hispanics don't get involved in politics because they come from countries where people distrust the government" (Baca, 2001). As the Hispanic population increases, its political influence could also grow significantly, but this would require Hispanics to trust the government more and to vote in larger numbers so they could impact the election process.

Clearly, the background research indicates that the growing population trend of Latinos in South Carolina presents a set of challenges that must be addressed by society as a whole. A recent trip to Mexico by members of Congress including Senators Jesse Helms, John Ensign, Chuck Hagel and Joseph Biden strengthened their support for the Hispanic population in the U.S. and their commitment to improved relations with the Mexican government. Rather than the traditional image of a superpower bullying a poorer neighbor, the U.S. delegation to Mexico expressed a strong desire for a partnership with Mexico. In fact, Senator Helms said, "I want my country never to take advantage of your country. And as long as there is breath in me, it won't happen."

Based on the foregoing background research and secondary data, procedures were developed to assess the needs of the Latino community in South Carolina.

Purpose and Procedures

Given that the goal of the field study was to assess the needs of the Hispanic community, as perceived by both the Hispanic and non-Hispanic communities, steps were taken to initiate the study. The first step was to identify and recruit USC-Columbia business students with an interest in the Hispanic culture and community. Six of the students selected were bilingual, and the other five were minoring in Spanish. These students received intensive classroom instruction in a variety of topics. For example, a representative from the USC Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Columbia gave an overview of small business services available in South Carolina through statewide SBDCs. Dr. Sandra Teel, of the Darla Moore School of Business Research Division, instructed the students on techniques for conducting focus group research. Dr. Jeffrey Arpan provided an informative class session that increased cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity to the Hispanic culture. He used examples to illustrate the value of an open mind and global vision when communicating with other cultures. An example of this would be the way other cultures deal with time, personal space, and business practices. To gain further insight, the students also conducted background research on Hispanics in South Carolina and shared this information in a panel discussion format. Outside of the classroom setting, a liaison from the Clemson Small Business Development Center gathered focus group participants from both the non-Hispanic and the Hispanic communities in a six county area. When the focus groups were planned, a maximum of 30 participants were expected. The actual turnout significantly exceeded projections. Accordingly, the research method was adjusted to accommodate a group of 50 to 60 people, resulting in a town meeting format. Dr. Sandra Teel explained that this

format is more accurately described as a "charrette". A charrette is used as a tool in public policy to gather groups of people to resolve community problems. The charrettes were conducted at three sites: the Chamber of Commerce in Greenwood, S.C., Grace Community Church in Greenwood S.C., and Saluda High School in Saluda, S.C. Student moderators, or co-moderators, were used at each site to facilitate the group sessions. Other members of the class acted as recorders documenting issues raised by the participants, using both flip charts and tape recorders. It is important to note that many students served as translators, increasing and encouraging the participation of those present. At the conclusion of the third meeting in Saluda, all data was gathered and analyzed by the class to form the basis for written and oral reports and recommendations.

Greenwood Business Focus Group

The first focus group was conducted in Greenwood, South Carolina at the Chamber of Commerce. There were over 60 representatives from six counties in the upper Savannah area of South Carolina participating in the group session. These counties included Greenwood, Laurens, Saluda, Abbeville, Edgefield, and McCormick. Members of the community included: business leaders, representatives from social services, economic development, education, government, and local chambers of commerce. The following topics were identified by the group and discussed throughout the meeting: transportation, education, communication, economic and financial concerns, social and political issues, health care and other community challenges.

Transportation

Transportation was the first issue identified as critical to meeting the needs of the Hispanic community. Collectively, the participants viewed transportation as a cost of business. Numerous employers agreed that transportation is a problem within their business. This issue is related to the inability of Hispanics to obtain a driver's license and to the lack of public transportation in rural areas of South Carolina. Another aspect of the driver's license issue is the requirement for a Social Security card which is compounded by language barriers that exist at the Department of Motor Vehicles. As a result, many Hispanics travel to North Carolina or Tennessee since neither of these states requires a Social Security card to obtain a license. Unfortunately, one participant reported that this leads to underground markets for selling falsified Social Security cards and birth certificates to illegal immigrants. Since many Hispanics in South Carolina encounter

barriers to legally obtaining a driver's license, they drive without a license or required insurance, and if they are stopped, they are subject to fines. Lack of transportation also impacts the education and health of Hispanics. They may not be able to commute to conversational English classes offered in their communities or to access health care facilities.

Education

Another community problem is education of Hispanic children in public schools. According to focus group participants, educators often ignore Hispanic parents even when their children are having problems in the classroom. A woman from Mexico related an incident that involved her child and an apparent lack of concern from her child's teacher and school administration regarding the child's academic programs. Participants related that Hispanic children have difficulties keeping up with their grade level and taking standardized tests. The mother of the aforementioned child attributed these problems to a lack of attention given to the academic progress of these students by the teachers as well as to language barriers. Some participants reported that teachers may "pass the buck" by promoting students who are unprepared for the next grade level. In addition, an assistant superintendent mentioned that a shortage of resources is an issue in the schools. He further noted that local funds were used to hire one bilingual teacher for grades K-5. Funds are not available or mandated to offset the cost of providing English as a second language (ESL) in public schools. In fact, several participants noted that Hispanic children and adults need instruction in both basic Spanish and English. This brings up the problem of communication barriers between and among cultures.

Communication

Focus group participants from the local literacy council noted that as a result of the communication barrier, non-English speaking Hispanics have a difficult time with basic employment issues and life-skills. For example, Hispanic workers may not be able to obtain information about worker's compensation and benefits. Furthermore, laws, regulations, and rights as employees are often not conveyed to them or are given to them in English. This language barrier has created an environment of misunderstanding among co-workers. One employer from the session emphasized the loyalty and strong work ethic of Hispanic workers, which may be envied by their co-workers. The communication barrier also presents problems for over-qualified Hispanics. Many workers are very skilled, educated, and talented; however, when they come to the United States they must often accept low-wage, blue-collar jobs requiring little education. This practice prevents full use of their qualifications which are potentially valuable to the community. For example, focus group participants reported that a Hispanic accountant worked as a teller and that another accountant worked as an assistant in a church.

Economic and Financial Issues

Low wages, poor working conditions, and child labor often characterize the jobs that Hispanics possess in the United States. In South Carolina, for example, common jobs include landscaping, peach picking, mop and broom companies, chicken processing plants, and meatpacking (Arpan presentation, May 15, 2001). To these companies, Hispanics are an essential part of the labor force and are highly recruited. In our research, two types of employers were identified. The first employer takes responsibility for

paperwork, housing, and other essentials of living for their Hispanic employees. The second type of employer is said to take advantage of Hispanic workers. According to participants, this type of employer pays lower wages than allowed and takes significant deductions from paychecks for housing and transportation costs.

In addition to economic problems, Hispanics often encounter financial issues. One of the main obstacles confronting Hispanics is the lack of Spanish spoken at financial institutions. According to a representative from First Citizen's Bank, bilingual tellers are hard to find and bank deposits and other paperwork are only written in English. Several participants noted that Hispanics have difficulty obtaining credit to purchase consumer goods such as houses or cars. Although they may have large sums of cash, they do not always understand how credit works. Hispanics have a distrust of banks based on previous experience in their native countries. Consequently, they do not understand all the financial opportunities available to them. Additionally, some Hispanics may not have the opportunity to make financial transactions because they do not have a Social Security card, which is required, at most banks.

Social and Political Issues

Today, some Hispanics may not be committed to becoming citizens and that deprives them of a voice in either local or national government. There are those Hispanics that want to learn, live, and succeed in South Carolina and there are those that want to make money and go back to their native countries. Several of the participants speculated that some Hispanics do not want to learn about American culture or stay in South Carolina. Consequently, they will remain separated from American society by

choice. For those Hispanics who want to stay, participants noted that frequently they are unaware of their rights. For example, the group noted that often when a Hispanic is arrested, they are not aware of all their rights because the arresting officer is unable to communicate in Spanish. They may have difficulties within the legal system because they cannot speak English. Another concern is that Hispanics who choose to remain in the United States may not know about their voting rights, and therefore have little power to impact their communities on a political level.

Health Care

A final concern was health care for Hispanics. Participants reported that some employers do not inform them about health insurance or worker's compensation. When they are in need of medical attention, they often confront language barriers at hospitals and doctor's offices. Several social workers reported observing cases in which Hispanics have had traumatic operations and have had no knowledge of the medical procedures or outcomes. According to one social worker, a Hispanic woman was operated on at a local South Carolina hospital without knowledge of the procedure being performed on her. The surgery this 33-year-old woman had undergone was a hysterectomy. Often there are no translators available at hospitals, and Hispanics may not trust the translators that are provided to them. Social workers at the session suggested that Hispanics are not educated on preventative health care and tend to use emergency room care, which is very expensive.

Greenwood/Saluda Hispanic Focus Groups

The final two focus groups were conducted at Grace Community Church of Greenwood and Saluda High School in Saluda, S.C. The majority of participants were Hispanic; therefore, the focus groups were conducted primarily in Spanish. The Greenwood group consisted of approximately 30 Hispanic females and 20 Hispanic males, as well as other community members. In Saluda, there were approximately 23 Hispanic females and 18 Hispanic males and other community members. The needs of the Hispanic community were identified by the participants and discussed through the focus group/town meeting format. These included transportation, education, communication, economic and financial, and health care issues.

Transportation

Transportation was a recurring theme, not only in the Non-Hispanic group but also in both Hispanic focus groups. While some Hispanics had trouble obtaining a driver's license due to lack of a social security card (as described earlier), others had dilemmas obtaining a license as a result of lack of translators at the DMV. Hispanics reported needing bilingual employees at the DMV and a translation of the driver's manual into Spanish. Another barrier cited was that the driving tests and study materials are in English, so Hispanics have a problem understanding the directions given to them, and therefore may fail the driver's test. This predicament leads to difficulties getting to work, classes, banks, hospitals, and many other places.

Education

Hispanics face other obstacles in pursuing an education. After long days at work, many Hispanics are often too tired to take English classes. Also, since many of them have little education in Spanish, English is even harder to learn without basic grammar skills. One woman who attended both the session of the business and community professionals and the first Hispanic group session told us that she was hired by a company to teach its employees English, but due to their lack of basic skills, they had no foundation for learning a second language. Also, many reported working grueling 12-hour days and being too tired to focus or attend class. Because of financial limitations, college, although desired, often seems like an unobtainable goal. Some of the other barriers to college identified by Hispanics included: a lack of bilingual guidance counselors, cultural differences, and a lack of scholarships to attend college in South Carolina.

Communication

Hispanics, just as the Non-Hispanic group, identified communication problems as an issue that needs attention. Communication problems not only exist between Hispanics and Americans, but also within the various Hispanic cultures. For example, one Hispanic small businesswoman mentioned that 22 Indian dialects are spoken in Guatemala and that she is unable to understand her customers from Guatemala. There is a need for information and translators in their communities. Also, at this session, participants observed that laws and legal rights are not communicated to them. Many of the issues and problems that Hispanics encounter can be traced to a lack of communication based on

language barriers and differences in cultures. One of the biggest communication problems mentioned, as reported earlier, related to the Department of Motor Vehicles and their policies and procedures. Focus group participants noted that Hispanics repeatedly return to the DMV with different papers and documents trying to obtain a license, but they are often unsuccessful because of misinformation or misunderstanding regarding the correct papers.

Economic and Financial

Hispanic participants noted that lack of knowledge about economic issues presents a barrier to starting a small business. Although many Hispanics expressed an interest in becoming an entrepreneur, they said they needed more information and translators to accomplish this goal. Hispanics may not know how to open a bank account, and consequently have problems obtaining credit. Lack of a credit record makes it difficult to start a small business. Another economic issue is employer's rights. Sub-contractors employ most Hispanics, and some participants reported a belief that they are underpaid and uninformed of their rights as workers. When workers are injured on the job they may miss many days of work and do not know that through worker's compensation they can be reimbursed for their missed time. They also may not be informed that worker's compensation will pay for their injuries, and therefore they may incur even further financial losses and prolonged health concerns.

Health Care

Health care is a serious and sensitive issue among the Hispanic communities. The majority of health care used by Hispanics is pre- and post-natal care (DHEC Study, June 2000). Women in the Hispanic community report that they have experienced unprofessional behavior and discrimination by health care workers, primarily student doctors and interns. Hispanics in the focus groups believed that they were discriminated against in emergency rooms. For example, one participant said that during an emergency room visit she waited for five hours while the Americans waiting received care first. Hispanic women voiced concern that they had been violated and experimented on during hospital stays and routine procedures. A grave example of this was expressed at the second Hispanic meeting. A woman described her story of delivering her child in a Greenwood hospital. She described an experience that made her feel like a guinea pig. There were several times when she had groups of students observing her which she felt was inappropriate. She also felt that she was not properly prepared for the surgery she had to ultimately undergo. In turn, the woman's social worker is initiating a lawsuit related to the treatment the woman received. These errors in communication may be due to translation and cultural issues in the hospitals causing confusion and misunderstanding between doctors and Hispanic patients in the hospital setting.

Social and Political

Social issues present the final area of concern identified by Hispanics. Housing is viewed as a major problem because focus group members reported that some landlords are discriminatory towards Hispanics. Participants alleged that landlords raise the rent for

Hispanics and do not provide adequate repairs in the housing units. Hispanics feel they also face discrimination from the police. One member of the community mentioned that a policeman pulled him over for no apparent reason and offered him a monetary bribe in place of a traffic ticket. Another participant was arrested for driving without a license. However, the driver actually had a license; he simply did not understand that the police officer was asking for the license. Hispanics feel that the overall treatment given to them by law enforcers is less than acceptable. The Mayor of Saluda, who was present at the second Hispanic focus group, said that it was imperative for him to know if there was corruption in the legal system. He further suggested that a Hispanic representative to communicate concerns to the local government would be helpful. It was suggested by another non-Hispanic participant that the Hispanic community in Saluda organize to ensure a voice in local government.

Although Hispanics feel they are discriminated against and receive unfair treatment in several areas, they understand and agree that there are many ways that they can improve their situation. There was a consensus among participants that Hispanics and Americans must work together to "bridge the gap" between cultures. Many said that there needs to be more effort on the part of Hispanics to learn English; however, Hispanics need the underlying support of their local community in this effort. Business, government, and community leaders as well as Hispanic community members voiced their opinions as well as their recommendations to try and resolve the issues faced in their communities.

Conclusion

Through our preliminary research, we learned the growing Hispanic community faces both opportunities and challenges at the national and local level. Going into the meetings, needs were recorded in the areas of transportation, health care, education, economic, social, and language issues. The initial idea was to conduct focus groups at each designated meeting place. However, the research method was adjusted to accommodate excellent attendance. Surprisingly, there was an average of 50 participants at each session, which created more of a "town meeting" atmosphere. Other unanticipated outcomes included providing a forum for the Hispanic participants to organize within the community and the identification of potential leaders. In one of the Greenwood focus groups, an editor from the local Greenwood newspaper promised to run a series of articles about Hispanic community concerns with possible solutions. This should heighten awareness in the Hispanic and Non-Hispanic communities. In each meeting we observed the following recurring issues:

- Transportation-This was the first issue brought up by each group. Many immigrants have difficulties obtaining a driver's license. Without solving this problem first, other issues such as education and health care are almost impossible to overcome.
- Obtaining the Social Security card- This also posed another major problem for Hispanics. Without a Social Security card, they are unable to open bank accounts, obtain driver's licenses, or receive adequate health care.
- Education- This issue posed a problem for both children and adults. Adults have difficulties getting to classes due to transportation problems and long workdays.

Children have other problems in schools, which need additional resources for bilingual instructors and cultural awareness training.

- Communication- Communication and the lack of translators were identified as a problem in classrooms, state agencies, the legal system, and hospitals.
- Economic issues- Issues expressed included long workdays, low wages, child labor, and not being informed of benefits and worker's compensation. On the positive side, Hispanics expressed interest in starting small businesses or expanding existing businesses.
- Financial issues- Hispanics found it hard to obtain credit and use bank services due to a lack of bilingual personnel and/or translators.
- Social issues- Issues discussed included corruption in the police department and housing problems. Another social problem identified was the lack of a community center for Hispanics to go to for information, recreation, and for meeting purposes.
- Health services- Issues related to health care exposed other problems. These included discrimination, lack of translators, insurance discrepancies, transportation, and lack of professionalism.

Throughout the meetings many problems were revealed, however with these problems came suggestions for solutions. The Hispanic and non-Hispanic communities showed a willingness to organize and to work together to solve community problems. This willingness is the first step in making a positive change for Hispanics and their local communities in the future.

Overview of Recommendations

- Community Centers
- Access to Career Centers
- Improved transportation options
- Temporary driver's licenses
- Temporary work permits/expediting labor certification process.
- Increased availability of translators and bilingual employers
- Bilingual banking forms
- Identification cards
- Collaborative efforts by universities; two and four-year colleges to increase opportunities in education
- Sensitivity and Cross-Cultural training
- Language Partners program
- Information to high school guidance counselors about college admission process and visa requirements
- Book Fairs
- Scholarships and Internships
- Increased bilingual employees in health care system
- Grant funding to assist small business start-ups
- Grant funding to meet needs in education and industry
- Increased contact with SBDCs and the SBA throughout South Carolina
- Website sponsored by the state of South Carolina with resource information
- Efforts to increase Hispanic voter turn-out

Recommendations

From the information gathered from the various focus groups and other outside sources, we have concluded that there are critical needs that must be addressed in the South Carolina Hispanic community. These needs include: transportation, economic, social, education, and health care issues. The following are suggested recommendations to aid local communities in addressing these issues.

Recommendation 1: Services and Outreach

A local center for the Hispanic Community would be a vital asset to towns across South Carolina welcoming our neighbors from the South. This could possibly be provided through local Chambers of Commerce or city councils. Through the center, Hispanics would be able to access information concerning local resources and the various programs available. These programs and resources could include: mentoring programs, information sessions concerning day-to-day activities such as banking, recreational services, English classes, and a welcome package for new immigrants. The center would serve as a liaison to ease the transition to a new culture. Ideally, the center would provide videocassettes and bilingual support for newly arrived Hispanics who have questions about living and working in their new community. English classes would also be included in this center, which the families could take together. Outreach businesses that serve both Hispanic and Non-Hispanic groups such as Hispanic Connections of Columbia, should be encouraged and supported in their efforts to expand services across South Carolina. Similarly, volunteer organizations and churches should receive support at the local level for their outreach programs. It is recommended that churches not currently involved in

Hispanic Outreach efforts work cooperatively to offer programs and services. This recommendation is strongly supported in a Workforce Development Report prepared by the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce in relation to the non-Hispanic population (pg 4-13).

Career Centers with bilingual staff are another resource that could assist educated Hispanics to find a job in the United States commensurate with their education level. These centers could be available through local community colleges. This would enable talented Hispanics to succeed in the United States, as well as provide good role models for younger Hispanics.

Recommendation #2: Transportation

Based on focus group findings, a van service would be of great benefit to the Hispanic community. Public transportation is not a feasible alternative to solve the transportation problem due to the state's inability to provide adequate services to the rural areas of South Carolina. A viable option for many business owners would be to provide transportation from within the company for their employees. For example, a carpooling system would be an inexpensive way to address this problem.

Another option would be to encourage the Hispanic community to provide private taxi services as a small business. This would encourage economic development as well as help the community. When Hispanics encounter barriers obtaining their driver's licenses in South Carolina, the state of South Carolina could follow the examples of North Carolina and Tennessee where Hispanics are able to obtain their driver's license without a social security card. Also, the state of South Carolina could investigate the possibility of

accepting Mexican driver's licenses on a short-term basis or even issue temporary driver's licenses from the state, for short-term residents. These measures would go a long way toward insuring safety on South Carolina's highways.

Recommendation #3: Communication

There is a tremendous need for bilingual teachers and employees in public services, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, hospitals, libraries, banks, and schools. Translators are also desperately needed in emergency situations, primarily in hospitals and in the police force, as there are many instances of miscommunication between Spanish speakers and English speakers. Another significant location for bilingual speakers would be in the workplace to explain safety rules and regulations. Many Hispanic participants reported not being informed about workman's compensation, and a bilingual speaker could help explain this to them. At the Department of Motor Vehicles, bilingual driving tests and books are greatly needed, as well as an interpreter for the Spanish speakers. Another service where translation is becoming increasingly important is at local banks. Bilingual banking forms (deposit slips, withdrawal forms, and loan applications) are needed, as well as Spanish speaking tellers to explain the banking procedures in South Carolina. Also, an identification card should be considered to enable Hispanics to cash employment checks and to use for routine activities requiring identification.

Additionally, a website should be established by the State of South Carolina to provide information to local communities about planning for the growing Hispanic

population, to list successful models in South Carolina or elsewhere, and to identify available resources for English as a second language and other critical needs.

Recommendation #4: Education

Education is an important issue in South Carolina, for both the general public and the growing Hispanic community; therefore, education cuts must stop. A possible suggestion is to have a collaborative effort through the Universities, colleges, technical schools, and local churches and other volunteer groups in the community to improve education for the growing Hispanic population. Sensitivity and other cross-cultural training for teachers and administrators in the school systems, and for police and other service providers in the community, could help improve communication between the Hispanics and Americans. Another option is to use a "buddy" system, or language partners, which would help to integrate young Hispanic children into the South Carolina school system. Using this program, a Hispanic student would be paired with a local English-speaking child and a Spanish-speaking child in their homeroom in order to ease the transition in coming to a new school. The English-speaking child could provide an excellent friend and an opportunity for the Hispanic child to learn English. The Spanish-speaking "buddy" would provide the child with a same-culture friend with whom to identify. This would benefit the students and help them learn more about each other while providing a transition between cultures. This program would cost nothing since the only requirement would be that students be willing to help one another. Another example of a successful program in education is in place in Lexington District One. This program teaches Hispanic children basic English words and phrases in preparation for school.

Certainly, other school districts could initiate similar programs using the Lexington program as a model. Another possible community outreach is conducting book fairs. Community groups, local churches, and other organizations, could conduct book fairs and donate books to the Hispanic community to assist in teaching and the learning of English.

Student visas are extremely important for those who desire to succeed and pursue higher education. Many Hispanic students have the desire and talent to continue their education, but they may lack the funds, the opportunity, and the proper visa to attend college. By permitting non-citizen aliens who have graduated from high school in the United States to more easily obtain a student visa, the government could remove one of the greatest hurdles blocking higher education for promising Hispanic students.

Another way Hispanic students can be assisted in attending college is for banks or private donors to establish scholarships for high achieving non-citizen students. Based on the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), banks and other financial institutions could offer scholarships and student loans to Hispanic students who represent part of the bank's minority market. Additionally, Hispanic students could be offered internships at local banks, for example, which would increase the availability of bilingual employees. This would enable the banks to help the community, obtain qualified, well-prepared employees, and generally enhance the bank's image as a valued community resource.

Recommendation #5: Health Care

Health care is another important factor, and an area which also critically needs bilingual translators. Many Hispanics feel discriminated against within the health care

system as evidenced by anecdotal data gathered in the focus groups. Ideally, both male and female translators available to area hospitals would decrease miscommunication associated with medical problems. Also, it is recommended that Hispanic patients be offered the option of seeing the same doctor on each visit to establish trust and to make their visits more comfortable.

Recommendation #6: Economic

Providing federal grants to assist Hispanics who want to start small businesses is another recommendation. These grants could also come from local Chambers of Commerce and other appropriate sources throughout South Carolina, providing a foundation for a long and prosperous relationship with the Hispanic community. Additionally, the SBDCs throughout the state should continue and expand their outreach efforts to the Hispanic community.

The banking system has many changes that it can implement in order to better serve the needs of the Hispanic community. One of the restrictions that can be lifted is the need for a Social Security card to start an account. By allowing the tax identification number to be used in place of the Social Security card, banks can attract more Hispanic customers who want to open an account. In order to further facilitate this, the banks should also try to employ more bilingual employees, and should provide banking forms in Spanish as well as in English. This would improve communication and promote goodwill between the bank and the community it is serving.

The banking system should also try to ease the restrictions placed on Hispanics trying to obtain loans. In the place of a credit history, which most new immigrants do not

have, banks could develop alternative credit criteria or allow the employers of the workers to co-sign for the loan. This would promote a stronger employer-employee relationship, while enabling Hispanics to purchase a range of consumer goods.

The 245(i) adjustment for the LIFE Act should be changed so that businesses will not be liable for illegal immigrants they may be employing while they are going through the certification process. Changing the acts will provide protection for businesses during the labor certification process. Employer concern about immigration status during the process is the primary reason why many employers are reluctant to sponsor employees to change their alien status. Also, since, during the labor certification process, the aliens are not allowed to work, temporary work visas need to be issued to those who are going through the certification process. This will ensure that those workers who are trying to become citizens will be able to support themselves and their family legally during the three to five year certification process, as well as provide the government with tax money that would otherwise not be obtained through illegally working immigrants. The labor certification process must be expedited. We recommend that support be given to the 245(i) adjustment provision of LIFE and that strong consideration be given to issuing temporary work permits during the labor process.

Grants should be written to address the needs highlighted by the field study. The most important grants would deal with small business development, economic development and classes that teach English as a second language. The money to fund these initiatives would provide significant opportunities and assistance to the Hispanic population in South Carolina. These funds could also underwrite future research efforts, including a comprehensive asset analysis throughout the state.

In future sessions of this course, consideration should be given to conducting an asset analysis, as a follow-up to the initial needs assessment. The needs assessment provided a beginning point to examine the complex and critical issues associated with the growing Hispanic population in South Carolina. It is recommended that the Darla Moore School of Business continue this outreach effort and that other colleges, universities, and organizations be invited to participate in these efforts.

Recommendation #7: Political

Efforts must also be made to get more Hispanics involved in politics, particularly in the voting system. The article, "Few Hispanics voting in S.C., records show" mentions how few Hispanic voters there are in South Carolina. Of the 95,076 Hispanic citizens in South Carolina, only 8,883 are registered voters (Baca, 2001). Many reasons were cited for this statistic. Michael Scardaville, a Mexican History Associate Professor at USC, attributed this to many Hispanics having to "support themselves as well as families remaining in Central America or Mexico "That doesn't leave enough time to participate in political activities," says Scardaville (Baca, 2001). Others cite a lack of English as being a factor. "Language is the biggest barrier," says Orlando Gonzales, a health-training specialist for Hispanic Outreach.

More efforts must be made by the state of South Carolina to get Hispanics into the voting booths. Democrats and Republicans have made some efforts to reach the Hispanic community. Democrats have run Spanish-language ads and created a program to seek out Hispanics (Baca, 2001). Republicans have organized a minority development committee and they also have held events designed to reach out to minority voters. Still, something

more must be done to increase the number of Hispanic voters and South Carolina could follow the lead of other states to accomplish this. For example, North Carolina is trying to increase Hispanic voters by setting a Hispanic agenda in government. Hispanics in North Carolina government are pressuring lawmakers to give attention to their issues and helping to create Hispanic-affairs staff positions to increase representation. In Georgia, the Republican leaders are making contacts with Hispanic leaders and campaigning on Spanish radio stations (Baca, 2001). South Carolina must continue to reach out to Hispanic voters and duplicate successful efforts from other states. Perhaps the state could also form a group that visits Hispanic households to make them aware of their voting rights and the voting procedure. This group could be made up of Hispanic and Non-Hispanic citizens who not only show Hispanics how to vote but who also emphasize just how important the process is in getting their voice heard.

Prologue

Shortly after the final class presentation in May 2001, it was learned that one of the areas visited had submitted a federal grant proposal with the help of the South Carolina State Department of Education requesting funding for a home educator. If the grant is approved, funds would be available to send a bilingual educator into Hispanic homes to teach literacy skills. Another promising outcome of the session conducted in Saluda is the organization of the local Hispanic community. It was learned that following the USC focus group session of May 2001, the Hispanic participants decided to organize. An organizational meeting for the Hispanic community is scheduled for June 16, 2001 at 9:00 am in Saluda—a large turnout is expected.

References and Possible Resources

- Chambers of Commerce (South Carolina)
- Clemson University Extension Service (Community Development Consultant)
- Command Spanish, Amelia Smith, Harbison Campus of Midlands Tech
- County Health Departments
- Governor's AD HOC Committee on Hispanic Initiatives
- Hispanic Connections, Columbia, SC and other Hispanic Outreach groups
- Index-Journal Newspaper, Greenwood, SC
- Internet resources (researching other state models)
- Small Business Development Centers in South Carolina (USC, Clemson, Winthrop)
- South Carolina Banks (First Citizens Bank and others)
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Office of Minority Health Services, and the Migrant Health Program
- South Carolina Technical Colleges (Piedmont Tech and others)
- The State Newspaper, Columbia, SC
- Student groups at USC, Clemson, Winthrop, and other interested universities/colleges
- The National Migrant Education Hotline
- Upper Savannah Council of Governments
- USC's English as a Second Language Program
- USC's Institute for Families in Society
- USC's International Programs for students

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