



## Immigrant Students and Higher Education **Culture**

### **THE ISSUE:**

#### **How can educational institutions and individual educators learn to adapt to the changing cultural makeup of their student populations?**

Even with the best of intentions, it is difficult for teachers and other school staff to become familiar with all the languages, cultural backgrounds, and experiences that their students bring with them to the classroom. This lack of familiarity can lead to conflicts between schools, teachers, students and parents, but much of this would be avoidable if Minnesota's immigrant communities and educational system had better avenues for understanding each other.

#### **Minnesota's systems of education need to improve their capacity to adapt to the changing cultural makeup of their student populations.**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **Create new mechanisms to prepare teachers, advisors, and school administrators to effectively educate immigrant students.**

Preparing school personnel to better serve immigrant students is both a long-term and short-term need. To address the short-term need, all teachers should receive a basic level of training in serving immigrant students through the teacher license renewal process. To address the long-term needs, we should add a focus on immigrant students to training programs for new teachers.

- **Require continuing education on multicultural issues for all teachers, guidance counselors, and school administrators.**
- **Add content to current urban education programs to prepare new teachers to serve immigrant students.**
- **Create new centers of excellence in teaching and advising immigrant students.**

#### **Increase opportunities for immigrants to become teachers, counselors and school administrators, especially through nontraditional avenues.**

Immigrant teachers and school staff provide a bridge between students' home cultures and the culture of American education and serve as role models for students. Programs should be established to develop qualified teachers from within immigrant communities. Possible models include:

- A masters-level teaching certification program.
- A cohort program with intensive training, mentoring and ongoing support, similar to Teach for America.
- A teaching certification program for immigrants currently working in non-faculty positions in schools and who wish to become teachers, counselors, or school administrators.
- Scholarships for immigrants entering teacher education programs.

This issue brief is based on the Citizens League's report *Educating Minnesota's Immigrant Students* (2009).

The report is available at [www.citizensleague.org](http://www.citizensleague.org) or by calling 651-293-0575.

See related issue briefs on Information, Cost, Language Preparation, and Meeting Minnesota's Workforce Needs.