

### **Project Abstract**

This proposal seeks funding to convene a research meeting with 12 Latina/o immigrant students from across California who have organized themselves into a collaborative research project called *los estudiantes migrantes y educación* (LEME). The LEME project held its first “Migrant Student Summit” in January 2008 and established a grass-roots research agenda focused on Latina/o immigrant students’ underrepresentation in higher education. LEME developed interview protocols targeting Latina/o immigrant parents’ participation in their children’s college-going. The follow-up meeting will provide the 12 student researchers, along with the PI, the opportunity to finish analysis of data collected from these interviews.

**Project Narrative (4 double-spaced pages)**

*Research Description:*

*Los estudiantes migrantes y educación* (LEME) is a grass-roots collective of 12 Latina/o immigrant students from across California and the PI of this proposal, dedicated to the struggle for educational equity in Latina/o immigrant communities. The LEME project is a collaborative and pedagogical research project that seeks to understand the educational inequalities faced by Latina/o immigrant communities, develop action plans, and assist in efforts to increase Latina/o immigrant participation in higher education. To this end, **the LEME project seeks funding to convene a follow-up research meeting in Los Angeles for its current investigations into the roles of parents in Latina/o immigrant college-going.** The specific goals of the research include understanding Latina/o immigrant parents': participation in students' college-going; perceptions of price and financial aid; and, experiences and perceptions of the college transition process, including but not limited to institutional characteristics/admissions requirements and the potential impact of student college choice outcomes. These goals will be met by answering the research question, "How do Latina/o immigrant parents come to know educational opportunity for their children?"

The LEME project chose to focus on the role(s) of parents after carefully reviewing literature on enrollment management, and college access more widely, as well as the findings from the on-going ethnographic work done by the PI that focuses on the 12 student participants of the LEME project itself. It has been found that parents wield an unparalleled, yet under-researched influence on students' college enrollment (Choy, 2002; Conklin & Dailey, 1981; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; McDonough, 1997; Paulsen, 1990). Yet, with the notable exception of McDonough's work, most of what scholars have found in the realm of parental

involvement has come from large-scale quantitative studies. Although foundational in establishing the relevance of parents in college-going, as Tierney and Auerbach (2005) state: “These large-scale studies are limited by reliance on subjects’ self-reports and by lack of information about the quality, as opposed to the frequency, of parental encouragement” (p. 41). Furthermore, these studies rely on a normative conception of the family, most closely representing the ways in which parents from culturally dominant backgrounds (i.e., white middle-class) might engage in college-going. The circumstances under which Latina/o immigrant parents engage in college-going are structurally and culturally different than normative experiences captured in these large-scale quantitative studies (Arzubiaga, Rueda, & Monzó, 2002; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2007; Rothenberg, 1998).

The participants involved in the LEME project identify with multiple marginalized identities – immigrant, first-generation college-going, Latina/o, Spanish speaking, migrant labor, rural or urban, and working-poor – each of which have been related to historical marginalization in U.S. schooling and access to higher education (McDonough, 2005; Nuñez, 2007; Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, & Morrell, 2002; Oakes, Rogers, Silver, Terriquez, McDonough, Renee, & Lipton, 2006; Ream, 2005; Gildersleeve, 2006). As a case, then, it is clear that Latina/o immigrant students face marginalization in U.S. higher education and face a tumultuous schooling environment in preparation for postsecondary opportunities.

*Los estudiantes migrantes y educación (LEME):*

The LEME project emerged out of the PI’s dissertation, which ethnographically explored the everyday experiences of how 12 Latina/o immigrant students came to know college access. The student participants come from immigrant communities across the state of California, and currently attend either a California public university, community college, or high school. The

ethnographic work between the PI and the 12 students has continued, and the relationships between them have transformed into a collaborative research team dedicated to the struggle for educational equity in Latina/o immigrant communities.

Over the past year, the PI made quarterly individual follow-up field visits with each student and organized one collective project meeting. Students organized themselves as a collective research team with a mission to support and assist Latina/o immigrant college-going in their home communities. In January 2008, the LEME project held its first Migrant Student Summit in Los Angeles, where participants developed their agenda for the year and interview protocols for use with parents in their home communities. Student researchers currently are conducting a series of three interviews with four sets of parents in each of their home communities. Cumulatively, the interview series covers a broad range of topics related to college access for Latina/o immigrant families, situated within their daily lives (e.g., financing higher education and parent's labor; immigration and relationships with schools; and the rhetoric of educational opportunity for immigrant children and perceptions of the college transition process).

*Research design:*

The 12 student researchers that make up the LEME project are currently using the three interview protocols with four sets of parents in their home communities. By July 1, students will have completed 144 interviews with 48 Latina/o immigrant parents. Analysis of these interviews will be on-going, as students complete them and they are subsequently transcribed. The LEME project has divided analysis across the three interview protocols into three analysis teams consisting of four student researchers and the PI. The research meeting for which this proposal seeks funding will be instrumental in the LEME project's goal of collaboratively discussing, examining, and analyzing the preliminary findings that emerge from these analysis teams. The

analysis to be done at the proposed meeting will focus on understanding Latina/o immigrant parents experiences across the topics of the interview protocols in order to answer the broader question, “How do Latina/o immigrant parents come to know educational opportunity for their children?” Furthermore, this meeting will provide the opportunity for the LEME project to collaboratively develop implications for their home communities, and especially for enrollment management policymakers and practitioners.

The PI teaches qualitative research methods in a graduate education program and has begun training the student researchers of LEME in qualitative methods. The analysis will follow an inductive approach (Bogden & Biklen, 2003), seeking to explain how Latina/o immigrant parents’ everyday experiences influence their children’s college-going. Each set of interviews from the three protocols will be subject to analytic scrutiny by both the initial analysis team and subsequently by the entire LEME project. The PI will assist in analysis throughout the project.

*Planned outcomes*

The LEME project plans to present findings at national conferences such as AERA and the College Access Network, as well as prepare manuscripts for leading journals such as AERJ and the Enrollment Management Journal. Also, the LEME project already is developing a grant proposal targeted to the Ford Foundation. The LEME project’s parent-focused work highlighted in this proposal is part of the broader scholarly and pedagogical collaborative between 12 Latina/o immigrant students and the PI. **Supporting the LEME follow-up research meeting in Los Angeles will not only enable the LEME project to complete its analyses of the parent data, it will enable the project to move forward and sustain its commitment to the struggle for educational equity in Latina/o immigrant communities.**

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