



PRESS RELEASE

USDA Invests in Hispanic-serving Institutions to Strengthen Higher Education in Agriculture

PUBLISHED: October 15, 2024

SHARE:



WASHINGTON, Oct. 15, 2024 – As Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations wrap, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today an investment of more than \$15 million to promote and strengthen agriculture-related higher-education programs at Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSI) nationwide.

“Hispanic-serving Institutions provide invaluable agricultural education programs and prepare Hispanic students across the nation for careers in food and agriculture that traditionally have not been available to them,” said USDA Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small. “The Biden-Harris Administration is proud to support our HSI partners in these efforts to provide hands-on experience and training for students. These partnerships will ensure that students continue to have the opportunities they need to have fruitful careers.”

The Hispanic population is underrepresented in college enrollment and the STEM workforce, although U.S. job opportunities are growing in food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences. Hispanic students account for 21% of U.S. enrolled college students, yet Hispanic students earn about 17% of bachelor's, 13% of master's, and 9% of doctoral degrees conferred, and make up 8% of the STEM workforce, according to Texas State University [research](#).

Projects funded through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) [Hispanic-serving Institutions Education Grants Program](#) are designed to attract and support students from underrepresented groups and prepare them for careers related to food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences. Other projects will enhance postsecondary instruction within these disciplines; provide opportunities and access to food and agricultural careers in the public, nonprofit and private sectors; and align HSI efforts with

other nonprofit organizations to support academic development and career attainment of underrepresented groups.

“As one of the key programs in USDA NIFA’s grant portfolio to build the next generation agricultural workforce and leaders, these projects will help build capacity at our nation’s Hispanic-serving Institutions,” said NIFA Director Dr. Manjit Misra. “Capacity building across U.S. universities is vital to ensuring students preparing for careers in agriculture represent the nation’s diverse population so our food system includes everyone.”

USDA funded [21 projects](#) across 10 states, including:

A collaborative project between the **University of New Mexico-Taos** and **New Mexico Highlands University** to increase communities' connections with natural resource management by supporting and preparing local youth for natural resource management professions. Called LISTOS, the project will offer hands-on experiential education, leadership training and literacy support to train well-rounded and skilled graduates for jobs locally and beyond.



A project at the **Metropolitan State University of Denver** will develop underrepresented minority college students into leaders and role models who advocate for diversity and policy change within the nutrition and dietetics profession. Diversity in this profession is needed that represents those they serve. Through the creation of a Becoming Culturally Aware Leaders Scholars program, the project will provide scholarships and academic training to learn how storytelling can be used to advance cultural responsiveness, and maximize effectiveness of leadership, mentoring and advocacy.

A project being led by the **University of Texas Rio Grande Valley** is addressing the preconceptions or misconceptions held by many first-generation Hispanic students about careers in food and agriculture, which often are rooted in personal histories and reinforced by a sense of unbelonging. Focusing on students at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, a federally designated Hispanic-serving Institution, the project will develop an inclusive model for investing in students through new training and workforce development in organic agriculture.

NIFA is building a better future by nurturing innovation in the food and agricultural sciences and cultivating equitable change in communities across the nation. Through investments in science as a solution to our greatest challenges, USDA NIFA collaborates with partners to drive research, education and Extension — improving lives, supporting livelihoods and sustaining the planet. In FY 2023, NIFA’s total scientific investment was \$2.5 billion.

USDA supports Hispanic communities and institutions throughout the year through the Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSI) National Program, which is overseen by the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE). This program manages the [USDA liaisons](#) stationed on, and covering regionally, HSI campuses across the country. These liaisons provide vital support to HSIs, connecting students and their surrounding communities with USDA programs and services. Today USDA liaisons serve at HSIs in Fresno, Calif., Imperial, Calif., Chicago, Ill., Edinburg, Texas, New York, N.Y., and Miami, Fla. USDA just signed cooperative agreements with two new institutions to host USDA liaisons in Las Cruces, N.M. and Yakima, Wash.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.



#

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

PRESS RELEASE

Release No.:
0198.24

CONTACT:
USDA Press

EMAIL:
press@usda.gov

U.S. Department of Agriculture