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**University of California San Francisco, Fresno in partnership
with California State University, Fresno receives
\$50,000 Award for Innovative Program Committed to
Latino Student Success**

WASHINGTON, D.C. –University of California San Francisco, Fresno in partnership with California State University, Fresno will receive a \$50,000 grant to implement a program to increase retention rates and academic success of Latino, low-income and first-generation pre-health students, the non-profit organization *Excelencia* in Education announced today. University of California San Francisco, Fresno was one of only twenty colleges and universities from across the nation chosen to receive the award.

The SEMILLAS grants, supported by the Walmart Foundation, are part of *Excelencia* in Education's "Growing What Works" national initiative. The initiative aims to accelerate Latino student success by refining and replicating model educational programs that are proven to advance Latino achievement in two-year and four-year colleges. The long-term goal of the project is to increase the use of these effective programs for the country's fast-growing Latino college age population.

Semillas is the Spanish word for seeds. It also stands for *Seeding Educational Models that Impact and Leverage Latino Academic Success*.

According to the US Census Bureau, Latino young adults are less likely to have earned an associate degree or higher than other young adults. In 2008, eight percent of Latinos 18 to 24 years-of-age had earned a degree, compared to 14 percent of all young adults. Latino adults, 25 years and over, were also less likely to have earned an associate degree or higher than other adults, with 19 percent of Latinos earning a degree, compared with 29 percent of blacks, 39 percent of whites, and 59 percent of Asians. Meanwhile, census projections estimate that Latinos will be 22 percent of the nation's college-age population by 2020.

"Today's undergraduate population looks very different than it did a generation ago," said Sarita Brown, president of *Excelencia* in Education, a non-profit organization that advocates for higher education programs and policies that serve Latino students and families. "All of the institutions selected to receive these grants understand this reality and have actively worked to create a climate on their campuses where Latino students are welcomed as an asset, regardless of their needs. This kind of supportive environment is critical to promoting Latino student success."

Colleges and universities received grants for work in one of four areas: 1) Helping first-generation, low-income Latino students gain college entrance, 2) Improving retention rates for students enrolled in college, 3) Helping Latino students transfer from two-year to four-year colleges, and 4) Increasing college graduation rates for Latinos.

“We’re very excited to receive the SEMILLAS grant in partnership with UCSF Fresno, and we are committed to promoting Latino student success by replicating our most promising and innovative programs,” said President John D. Welty, President of California State University, Fresno.

Excelencia staff and members of the “Growing What Works” initiative will work with the selected institutions throughout the 2009-2010 academic year, and then share their findings.

"The Walmart Foundation is pleased to support the 'Growing What Works' initiative in its efforts to promote Latino student success," said Michelle Gilliard, Senior Director of Workforce Development and Education for the Walmart Foundation. "We are hopeful that with help from the SEMILLAS grants this impressive group of colleges will be able to build the foundation for successful educational programs that will serve as models for universities across the nation."

A full list of SEMILLAS grant winners may be found at http://edexcelencia.org/programs/what_works/.

Excelencia in Education, is a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization whose mission is to accelerate Latino student success in higher education.

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