Denver Listening Conference Summary

Richard Wagner
UCAR Affiliates
UCAR Annual Meeting
6 October 2010
Meeting the Challenge of Denver’s Future: Preparing a diverse next generation of weather and climate professionals

March 2, 2010, Downtown Denver
Tivoli Student Union, Auraria Campus

Three institutions share the Auraria Campus:
University of Colorado Denver, Metro State College
and Community College of Denver
The philosophy of the listening conference

Innovation comes from new networks and understanding of the Hispanic culture, needs and opportunities.
Why a listening conference focused on Latinos in Denver?

In order to adapt to and mitigate rapid environmental changes and grow a “green economy”, the nation and the Denver Metro area need additional expertise in all areas of science and engineering, including weather and climate. We are not on track to generate this expertise – particularly because we are failing to attract and advance talented students from the rapidly growing Latino population. At the same time, a gap in environmental science knowledge in minority communities jeopardizes their ability to benefit from the green economy and represent their community’s interests in discussions of adaptation and mitigation strategies.
Problems to Address

Three interrelated problems - National in scope with impacts in the Denver Metro Area:

1. Low rate of minority participation in STEM, particularly in the area of Weather and Climate.

2. Poor environmental and STEM literacy in the general public, including literacy about weather and climate.

3. Limited economic opportunity, especially for minority communities.
Attendees at the Conference

The main session had over 80 attendees including

1. Hispanic Entrepreneurs
2. Universities (CU Denver, CU Boulder, Colorado State, Colorado School of Mines, Metro State College, Community College of Denver)
3. Labs (NOAA, UCAR)
4. K-12 (Denver and Boulder Public Schools)
5. Media (Univision)
6. Solar Energy, Green energy Industry
7. Government and Non-profit Organizations

The Executive Breakfast was attended by 20 organizational representatives, 6 of which represented the Hispanic Community.
Conference Format

Executive Breakfast

Working Groups

Lunch Speaker
What we learned

- Family values and effective dynamics to work and attract Hispanics into Science
- Career knowledge and awareness (e.g. $ hr^{-1}$)
- Paths start in middle school (at the latest)
- Multiple interactions with science and scientists (as a family)
- Internships are important
- STEM literacy precedes climate and weather literacy
- Geoscience and green jobs are unfamiliar and risky relative to Business, Medicine, and Law
Suggested Strategies

1. Next-generation Workforce Curriculum
2. UCAR 50th. Anniversary as an opportunity to establish stronger ties with local community.
3. Community Colleges and the Colorado Alliance for the Development of STEM-related Careers
4. Targeted Messengers and Messages
5. *High School Internships*
Working with others, we can support a positive feedback

- Community Organizations
- K-12 Schools
- Higher Education
- Industry & Business
- Research Labs

Weather Climate for Latino students

Latino participation in “green economy”

Increased relevance of geoscience to Latino priorities

Latino perspectives in adaptation planning

More diverse geoscience workforce
Thanks to:

**Main Sponsors**

- UCAR Community Building Program
- Metro State College Diversity Office

**Partners**

- Namaste Solar
- University of Colorado Denver
- Community College of Denver

**Planning Committee:**

UCAR: Raj Pandya, Marina La Grave, Kathy Strand, Karen Smith-Hermann
Metro State: Rich Wagner, Myron Anderson, Larry Johnson, Julie Sharer-Price
University of Colorado Denver: Andy Pattison, Lisa Carlson, Christine Johnson
Namaste Solar: Lauren Coyne