

Dr. Marla Franc...:

No. Yes. No worries. Well first off, welcome to the University of Arizona. I feel like I'm a little speed blocked right now. I tend to be a move the room type of presenter, but welcome to the University of Arizona. Welcome to the state of Arizona. It is a sheer pleasure to be the university host for this meeting and to have collaborated with your colleague on the planning of your arrival. But hearing those quick introductions is just incredibly impressive in terms of the assembled thought leadership and experience that is convened through this meeting and just coming to understand the purpose, and the charge, and the intention of this group really, I think, gives me some solace as to stewarding, I think, some real meaningful and purposeful work within the USDA to ensure that equity and access really is at the heart of what you all are doing.

And so thank you for nurturing our natural resources, feeding the nation, and keeping us well supplied as a nation in both pandemic times and non-pandemic times if we happen to be in those. But I am Marla Franco, and I serve as the inaugural Vice President for Hispanic Survey Institution Initiatives here at the University of Arizona. I have to say, if you visit any of the other 558 Hispanic Survey Institutions in across the nation, you will likely not find this level of commitment at a institutional level with a spearheaded focus on advancing, really developing capacity and accelerating our designation in a meaningful way. I think synonymous with what this committee is charged for. You know, all really want to ensure that the scope of the work is manifested in real meaningful and genuine ways throughout the USDA, and equally so, my president has charged me and given me the ability to vision out what this work looks like not only for the University of Arizona, but across the state of Arizona and having a national influence with some of the work that we do.

So I'm here to share a little bit about HSIs in general across the nation, and also to highlight some of the key staple offerings through the USDA that really have served as the foreground for advancing partnership with Hispanic Serving Institutions and their surrounding communities. I think equally where there are, I think some real gems in terms of where that capacity has been built, but then how collectively does this group think about how to accelerate, and scale, and find increased opportunity in partnering with higher education institutions, and the communities that they're connected to really accelerate the purpose and the mission of the USDA, as well as this work groups. So, if we can advance the slides please. So just a little bit of national context. So Hispanic Serving Institutions, it's actually a federal designation that comes to us by way of the US Department of Education.

And really it was birthed out of an increased student population identifying as Hispanic Latinx, that really emerged in the seventies and the eighties, and grew some momentum by the hand of advocates really wanting to acknowledge the increase in the growth in this population and really having some critical consciousness around it to ensure that we were actually supporting these students in not only being able to access our higher education institutions, but ensuring that they make their way towards degree completion. So that federal designation came to be earmarked by the US Department of Education, and

essentially the higher education institutions across the nation that qualify are any two year community college or four year university that enrolls at minimum 25% undergraduate Hispanic or Latinx population. There are no... I always say that this is a bit of a misnomer because there's not one additional penny that comes to Hispanic Serving Institutions just because of that designation.

But it does present us with the opportunity to competitively thrive for earmarked programs that either are explicitly earmarked for Hispanic Serving Institutions, and other minority serving institutions, or programs offered through the federal agency that highly encourage minority serving institutions to apply. So that does present us with some opportunities to competitively vie for those funds. Nationally, there are 559 Hispanic Serving Institutions across the nation, and that number tends to increase exponentially from year to year. There is a list published by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities with the most updated list of Hispanic serving institutions. And so I feel like any day now we should be getting the most up-to-date list. Collectively across the nation, these institutions enroll 1.44 million undergraduate Latino students, so that's not even accounting for the graduate student population. And in the next slide, if you will, we're able to... One of the data points that I think is most impressive is that Hispanic Serving Institutions account for only 18% of all US higher education institutions in the nation, yet we enroll two thirds of all Hispanic Latinx undergraduate students.

So when you think about where they're located, they are attending predominantly Hispanic Serving Institutions. So when you think about really tapping in and plugging in to the nation's diversity at US higher education institutions, you're going to find a wealth of that diversity at Hispanic Serving Institutions. So if you can advance to the next slide. One of the things that I like to also shed light on that also that Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities likes to shed light on is the scope, and depth, and breadth of student diversity from a demographic perspective that you will also find at HSIs. So while many... The HSIs were not, when you compare them, for example, to HBCUs that have an explicit mission towards a certain population, that is not the history of HSIs, right? HSIs really were predominantly white institutions that through demographic shifts became Hispanic Serving Institutions.

So while you see a large proportion of Hispanic Latinx students at these HSIs, you also will find one out of four African-American college students also attending HSIs, one in five Native American college students attending HSIs, and nearly four out of 10 Asian-American college students attending HSIs. So they really are methods of student demographic diversity that you'll find across the nation. If you want to advance to the next slide. Here is, it's a little hard to see from here, but RJ does have the slide deck so you all can take a look at this much closer at your leisure, and I do include the hyperlink where you can actually take a look at this map on your own personal device, which is helpful, but this is certainly a demographic picture here where you will find the number of Hispanic Serving Institutions by state.

The ones that are shaded in gray are the ones that have Hispanic Serving Institutions currently. There's at least two numbers located that are both in red and blue, and so the number of Hispanic Serving Institutions are indicated in the numbers in red font, and in blue font, those are emerging HSIs. That's another kind of slice of category identifying higher education institutions that have either between a 14 and a 24% Hispanic undergraduate involvement. So they're kind of at the cusp, or they're making their way... They're on the pathway toward likely becoming HSIs at some point in time. So you'll obviously see, if you look at states like California, Arizona, New Mexico, of course, Texas, Florida, and some other key states, you see high concentrations of your Hispanic Serving Institutions. Here you can see list of actual higher education institutions organized by state as well. So when you're thinking about the state that you provide leadership to and represent, you'll be able to find some of you are very likely partnered either within your state, or possibly neighboring states, which often cluster together in partnership.

So if you advance to the next slide. I wanted to highlight a few of the USDA HSI related partnerships. Both at a kind of macro level and a bit to illuminate what that looks like at the micro level here for our university, here at the University of Arizona. So if you advance to the next slide. So one of the things... I kind of wanted to anchor this a bit to some of the data that we capture and analyze here at the University of Arizona and connect that to really the importance of access to internships and obviously recruitment engagement, so that students are connected to employment opportunities as they near graduation. But we actually administer a survey as do many other universities, particularly for your institutions. We administer a survey as students indicate they are about to graduate, and we ask them a whole host of questions including student demographic questions, but we also ask them about their patterns of engagement during college.

And we'll also ask them about what they have lined up post graduation. Whether that's having secure full-time employment, part-time employment, or perhaps many of them might be pursuing graduate school immediately after completing their bachelor's degree. And what we know is that internships matter for all students, but they exponentially matter and have a greater positive impact for our students of color, in particular. When analyzing and segregating the data, we had found that for our Hispanic Latinx students, they were two times more likely to report having secured employment if they had had an internship at any point during their undergraduate experience. And we find that to be the case when we disaggregate by other racial ethnic subgroups, as well as help eligible and first generation college status. So, internships matter for all students, but they matter even more in terms of being these outlets of experiential opportunities that likely have connections that lend well to them securing employment post graduation.

[inaudible 01:32:22] segues over to a few of the examples that I wanted to highlight, and hopefully this is the data point to just really illuminate how much it matters, and for whom it matters most. So we can advance to the next slide.

So here are a few ways that we partner either as a university or as kind of a collective body of higher education institutions who have a vested interest in advancing Latinx student educational attainment nationally. So at the top left, the University of Arizona has several distance locations throughout the state of Arizona, and those provide us with exponential opportunities for accessing particularly our rural communities where the agricultural industry is very rich and vibrant and very active. So if you've never been to Yuma, or you do not know where Yuma is, it is definitely an agricultural hub that actually borders the border of Arizona and California.

We have a phenomenal regional director, Roberto Gonzalez, who is based out in that region, and he is our go-to person with the USDA and helps make many things happen and helps facilitate great connections throughout the federal agency. But UA Yuma, for example, has this particular program in partnership with the USDA. It's really around conservation service summer internships for this summer. This is just one of many examples of what that partnership constantly looks like between all the locations that the University of Arizona has, but without that partnership, really, these things just can't come to fruition, I think, in the way that we see them today. On the bottom left is actually the organization that I mentioned, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and you all as a USDA federal agency are very well-connected and tapped in to advertising any internship opportunities through their National Internship Program.

So as opposed to shouldering some of the labor involved in curating these relationships per higher education institution, while you all do that quite well, you also go through its national professional organization to really also capture a wider net of students, which is greatly appreciated. On the right-hand side is just an example. We also partner with Rick Tafoya. Yes, Rick Tafoya, and other colleagues at the USDA, to do even these virtual hiring events through the USDA. So much... We certainly engaged in many opportunities to engage virtually in partnership with the USDA, particularly during the pandemic, but I think regardless moving forward and continuing some of the virtual engagement along with in-person engagement that our students have access particularly within some of our rural communities. If you advance to the next slide, please.

This is an example of... This is a University of Arizona specific example, but this really highlights the USDA's Multicultural Scholars Program. One of our faculty a few years ago, we had partnered with her, she had applied for the grant, was awarded the grant, and one of the most pivotal things that this grant provides is direct scholarship support to students, and the faculty really helps kind of cluster some additional resources,, in addition to those financial resources to students, including mentoring and advising guidance, networking with peers, professors, and the community, being able to facilitate and connect them to community organizations, and just really helping them with some of their professional development and career readiness skillset. But this is also an elective course that students can take, so they earn credit, and they get financial support for being engaged as a scholar. So these really end up being

tremendous points to ensure access, retention and support of degree completion in these really pivotal degree programs that support collectively the USDA's mission.

So I just wanted to highlight this as an example of existing partnerships for grant funded programs that HSIs definitely seek to take advantage of. If you can advance to the next slide. One of the other things that we also heavily promote is the Kika De La Garza Fellowship Program. This is your Hispanic Serving Institution's national program where we encourage our faculty and staff, and also, it's something that our local high school educators can also apply for. But this is an opportunity in the summer that education fellows and the high school education fellowships are a four-day experience at [inaudible 01:38:07]. And then the science fellowships are 11-day experience into [inaudible 01:38:11]. All-inclusive, all their travel accommodations, and their stay, and the full professional development opportunity is a covered expense by the USDA for them.

And so, one of the things that we do is we actually intentionally host webinars as well as pump advertisements out through our social media to really help generate awareness about the fellowship program, not only to U of A faculty and staff, but we pump that out throughout our statewide HSI consortium [inaudible 01:38:45] to make sure we're really getting the message out that these opportunities are available through the USDA. And so we typically, the past few years kind of hit or miss, given the pandemic, but we have had several faculty and including academic advisors go through this program we selected. It's highly competitive to be selected and they get to have this experience that really exposes them to all the opportunities, all the programs, all the grant programs that are available through the USDA so that they come back and really be ambassadors for the USDA within our own institution, making sure that students know about the scholarship opportunity. They themselves feel more encouraged and incentivized for how to apply for these grant programs and can share that with their colleagues within their academic departments. So we partnered actually with the USDA [inaudible 01:39:43] and a few others to cohost a USDA sponsored webinar where we provided some technical information on how to apply and then what was nice is we invited cats fellows who work at the UA to come and attest to their experience and the ways in which they were able to apply what they learned back here at the University of Arizona. So when you pair those opportunities to highlight both the opportunity with the people who have gone through it, I think it really helps motivate people to apply.

If you can advance to the next slide, please. These are actually just highlighting two of our fellows who have actually gone through the program and their associated titles. Dr. Robert Torres is the department head who's gone through that experience, then Brianna Watkins is actually an academic advisor within the college. So on the left is the advertisement that was used to promote the webinar that we held in February this year. If you advance to the next slide, please. This is also just another example of our ongoing collaboration. Every

time Roberto emails me, he comes to me with these ideas and always a conversation about like, "Hey, do you want to do this? You want to cohost this?" We're usually named for most, if not all that he suggests to us. So this is an example on the left-hand side of something that we did during the pandemic. We co-hosted an Arizona community prosperity virtual summit. I think we had close to or nearly over 300 registrants for that virtual summit across the entire state of Arizona, so it was very well attended.

We actually have some of the remnants still on a website where people can go back and look at the whole agenda of the virtual summit. It was really an opportunity for us to partner with the USDA and the community to really dig into the taskforce on agricultural effort prosperity and the report that was available. If you want to advance to the next slide, please. This I'm super, super excited about. So this takes us back to Yuma and if you all really want to go to Yuma, I will be there in person as will many other people. I'm just super excited because it actually is USDA funded work. So this is comes out of the NIFA program.

The nutritional plan and wellness degree program is actually renovating and we will be doing a launch and ribbon cutting for the field there that is partly sponsored by the USDA and so this is their innovative description. But essentially, the whole grant provides support to expanding students and cadets to hands on experiential learning activities in UA Yuma, which is one of our branch campuses. They actually built a culinary research laboratory and a demonstration kitchen, including a community garden.

So they are going to be leveraging that type of learning environment to help prepare students for graduate school and the workforce. So when they got this grant and I already knew what they had proposed, I said, "When this kitchen opens ups.", I said, "We're going to make a big deal about it and we're going to invite everyone." So we've sent invitations out to Roberto, to Imma Laurence as well. I just saw Imma at a conference in San Francisco the other week and also did a followup email to see if she was interested in joining us. So we also want community involvement, right? So the city of Yuma commerce, right. We want elected and appointed officials. We want Arizona Western Community College is right next door to UA Yuma. We want the community college leadership and students there. So I can't wait to be in Yuma in May, hopefully it's not too hot by then. Regardless, we're going to have a great time and make a real big fuss about it.

So if you could advance I think to the next slide, I can't remember. So those are just I think a quick snapshot of both HSIs as its body of higher education institutions across the nation, I think a 50,000-foot level of the partnerships that USDA has in place to really support these types of institutions, and then I think letting you see a glimpse of what this work looks like on the ground and ways in which it's so meaningful and impactful to really supporting student success and really accelerating degree attainment and workforce need. Meaning workforce needs of our nation amongst this diverse population that you find at HSI. So I

am super excited about the work that you all are going to be doing here these next few days at the University of Arizona and certainly want you to feel both inspired by what I shared, but also continuously charged with I think the set of responsibilities that you have in serving on this committee. So I'm happy to take any questions or comments if you have any.