



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 10, 2021

Media Contact:

Program Manager Jessica Ledesma, jessica@westmihcc.org, (616) 452-3960

***Excelencia* in Education Selects Building Bridges Through Education As 2021 National Finalist of What Works for Latino Student Success**

Local Initiative One of Only 21 in the Country to Receive National Recognition for Asset-based Approach to Serving Latinos

Grand Rapids, MI (September 10, 2021) — *Excelencia* in Education, the nation's premier authority on efforts accelerating Latino student success in higher education, announced September 9, 2021 that Building Bridges Through Education (BBTE) powered by the West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce was selected as a national finalist for the 2021 Examples of *Excelencia*.

Examples of *Excelencia* was created in 2005 and is the country's only national effort to identify, aggregate and promote evidence-based practices improving Latino student success in higher education. Even in these challenging times, it is a powerful reminder that there are many in our community working diligently to intentionally serve our students.

"Examples of *Excelencia* identifies evidence-based programs that show, with intentionality and impact, what it means to truly serve Latino students and not just enroll them," said Deborah Santiago, Co-founder and CEO, *Excelencia* in Education

This year, *Excelencia* received 145 program submissions representing 23 states and Puerto Rico. The 21 finalists will be featured online as well as in *Excelencia's* [Growing What Works Database](#) – the only national online, searchable database for institutional leaders, funders, and policymakers interested in identifying what works for Latino students.

On October 28, 2021, four of the 21 finalists will be announced as the 2021 Examples of *Excelencia* and recognized at the annual *Celebración de Excelencia*. The national announcement of the four programs will be held virtually at the online [Celebración de Excelencia](#).

"It is an atypical body of work we are leading here in Michigan that has caught the attention and interest of our peers across the nation," BBTE Program Manager Jessica Ledesma said. "For them to see Michigan based companies and universities support Leaders of color to lead an intentional long-term

investment in the Latinx community for the advancement of the greater community flips the typical nonprofit/charitable contribution narrative to trust-based partnerships driven by equity. It is what has enabled significant positive outcome in such a short amount of time.”

To see the full list of the 2021 Examples of *Excelencia* finalists visit: <https://www.edexcelencia.org/2021-examples-excelencia-finalists>

Every year, Examples of *Excelencia* begins with a national call for nominations encouraging individuals and programs to share initiatives accelerating Latino student success in higher education. *Excelencia* in Education reviews all program profiles of those intentionally serving Latino students and, this year, identified 21 finalists using rigorous criteria. Finalists identified in each of four categories—associate, baccalaureate, graduate, and community-based organizations—are presented to a national selection committee composed of higher education leaders, grant makers, and stakeholders. The committee assesses the strength of innovative, intentional, culturally relevant, and effective high-impact practices tailored to Latino students and their communities to select the four Examples of *Excelencia*.

###

About *Excelencia* in Education

Excelencia in Education accelerates Latino student success in higher education by promoting Latino student achievement, conducting analysis to inform educational policies, and advancing institutional practices while collaborating with those committed and ready to meet the mission. Launched in 2004 in the nation’s capital, *Excelencia* has established a network of results-oriented educators and policymakers to address the U.S. economy’s needs for a highly educated workforce and engaged civic leaders. For more information, visit: <http://www.EdExcelencia.org>.

ABOUT BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH EDUCATION

Building Bridges Through Education is an initiative powered by the West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to advance Michigan Latinx college talent by bridging college and career through career connections and development to help grow a dynamic and inclusive workforce in Michigan. BBTE is proudly supported by the Wege Foundation and DTE Foundation. Spectrum Health, Steelcase, Amway Corporation, Haworth, Bethany Christian Services, Grand Valley State University, Kellogg’s, Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, MillerKnoll, Western Michigan University, the West Michigan Whitecaps and Ferris State University are initiative partners. Learn more at <https://westmihcc.org/building-bridges/>

ABOUT THE WEST MICHIGAN HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to working with all members of the community to increase the economic advancement of Hispanic owned businesses and to assist the professional growth of Hispanic business leaders in West Michigan. Learn more at <https://westmihcc.org>