

STATE OF COLORADO



DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Oct. 1, 2013

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PRESS RELEASE: LT. GOV. JOE GARCIA IS KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT NATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE STATE OF LATINO EDUCATION

DENVER – Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia is the keynote speaker at this week's 9th annual National Summit on the State of Latino Education, a three-day conference in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials.

The focus of this year's gathering is ensuring access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education. Nationally, Hispanics are underrepresented in STEM education and STEM careers, accounting for 14 percent of all workers but just six percent of STEM employees.

Lt. Gov. Garcia, who is chief education policy advisor to the governor and executive director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education, today will discuss Colorado's efforts to improve students' ability to excel in STEM fields from early childhood through college.

"We can't start when students are juniors and seniors in high school," Lt. Gov. Garcia said in his prepared remarks. "In fact, we can't start too soon, and that means working with very young children, with families, with Early Childhood education programs, even with pediatricians and others who see children and families at the very earliest stages."

Lt. Gov. Garcia will describe Colorado's early literacy initiatives, assisted by nearly \$45 million in federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grants and passage of the 2012 READ Act, which provides early identification of struggling readers. He'll also outline efforts in middle and high schools to improve college readiness, such as Colorado GEAR UP's Early Remediation Project, and he'll discuss the state's higher education master plan, which sets clear goals around degree attainment.

While he's since graduated from Harvard Law and led a community college and a university, Lt. Gov. Garcia will relay that he himself was once a STEM student who opted for a different field. Nationally, 16 percent of Hispanic students who began college in 2004 as STEM majors completed a STEM degree by 2009. That compares to 25 percent of white students.

"If we are serious about reaching the numbers of STEM graduates we need in order to create a skilled workforce and ensure a healthy economy, we simply cannot get there if we don't have proportional growth in STEM graduates among Hispanics – the fastest-growing demographic in our country," Lt. Gov. Garcia said in his prepared remarks. "It is mathematically impossible."

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