



The National Hispana Leadership Institute

CCL's Leadership Development Program (LDP)[®]: a key partner in cultivating new generations of Latina leaders

Currently 20 million strong, Hispanic women represent a vibrant and fast-growing segment of the U.S. population whose contributions are increasingly important to the economy and the workplace. Though Latinas have overcome many challenges to achieve success in business, they continue to face significant barriers when entering management and advancing up the corporate ladder. This disparity propelled the National Hispana Leadership Institute (NHLI) into being nearly 20 years ago. Its mission: to empower Hispanic women through training, professional development, relationship building and community, and world activism, so they can advance in business and also improve the world around them.

"It all started after a U.S. Department of Labor report showed that minorities and women tend to get to mid-level positions but nothing above that," said NHLI President Marisa Rivera-Albert. This high-level "glass-ceiling" report galvanized Hispanic community leaders to action. At focus groups around the country, women were asked, "What's stopping you from moving up the corporate ladder, or running for office, or moving forward?" The responses ranged from lack of resources to lack of training to lack of credentials.

What the community leaders learned at the focus groups became the genesis of a well-grounded executive leadership program that spans nine months each year, providing an active-learning education in public policy, leadership, strategic management, and race, class and gender issues.

More than 400 women have completed the program since 1988. The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)[®] has played a seminal role from the beginning, providing scholarships to its Leadership Development Program (LDP)[®] as one of the four distinct learning weeks.

"All of the top leadership programs in the country were looked at for possible inclusion," said Rivera-Albert. "The LDP was chosen because it provided all of the critical learnings needed by a mid-level to upper-level manager. The 360-degree feedback is one of the best things CCL has to offer. For some, it's the first time they've received an honest opinion about their performance. It helps them focus on what's next."

OBJECTIVES:

- Establish a leadership development path for Latina professionals
- Provide awareness around skill strengths and areas for development
- Build a networking community
- Empower Latinas to develop their full potential

OUTCOMES:

The NHLI reported these findings from its 14-year impact study of the leadership program.

- 95 percent of alumni said it taught them new leadership skills
- 91 percent agreed they are more effective leaders because of the training
- 10 percent have run for public office; six percent have won local elections and one percent was elected to a statewide office
- On average, each alumna directs, serves or has policymaking positions on four community organizations.
- Alumni are earning substantially more income than before their NHLI experience.

The NHLI fellows attend the five-day LDP individually, choosing among CCL's three North American campuses. The other three formal training sessions are spent as a group: first in California, then at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and concluding, in week four, in Washington, D.C., where participants attend briefings at the White House and meet with members of Congress. In addition, each alumna mentors two Hispanic women for two years and develops a leadership project benefiting at least 25 Latinas.

The institute receives 100 to 300 applications for the two-dozen or so openings in the program each year. "All of the women we select have a leadership track record, are already doing incredible things and have it within them to make even greater impact," said Rivera-Albert.

"The program gives them the know-how, networking, connections and credentials that allow them to blossom and achieve higher levels of leadership they weren't even able to imagine before. I've seen this happen year after year."