

Baptists strengthen state by investing in Hispanic education

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DALLAS—When Texas Baptists contribute toward educational opportunities for Hispanic youth, they are investing in the state's future, Albert Reyes told a Hispanic Texas Baptist gathering.



Albert Reyes "A university degree translates into great opportunity," Reyes, president of Buckner International, told the Hispanic Education Initiative luncheon, held during the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas annual meeting.

In turn, that means an economically stronger state, financially secure churches and Hispanic young people who are able to reach their God-given potential, he said.

An individual with a high-school diploma can expect \$1.2 million in average lifetime earnings, he reported. In comparison, anticipated average lifetime earnings total \$2.1 million for a person with an undergraduate degree, \$2.5

million for an individual with a master's degree, \$3.4 million for a person with an academic doctorate and \$4.4 million for someone with a professional degree.

Greater educational opportunity and the financial security education provides also help contribute to family stability, Reyes said.

"I personally have met some of the poorest people on this planet," he said. "Families suffer from unimaginable poverty—poverty that is linked to a lack of skills and educational opportunity. Education is good for families, and education is good for communities."

The Texas high school graduation rate for Hispanic youth is about 86 percent now, compared to 50 percent not too long ago, Reyes said. However, only 20 percent of Hispanic adults have college degrees, and Hispanics will account for 70 percent of Texas' growth through 2050.

"The U.S. workforce is becoming more ethnically diverse and less well-educated," he said. As Baby Boomers continue to retire, the workforce will continue to become drastically less educated, resulting in decreased income, a decline in tax revenue and fewer resources for public education.

"It's a vicious and dangerous spiral," Reyes said.

Texas Baptists need to invest in scholarships for Hispanic youth and promote programs to prepare high school students to succeed in college, he noted.

The [Hispanic Education Initiative](#) is a partnership of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas designed to help students complete high school and succeed in college.

In addition to providing scholarship assistance to college students, the initiative also offers parenting education, seeks to reclaim students who left

school and helps preschoolers prepare for kindergarten.

“What you do to encourage others to pursue education is an act of redemption,” Reyes said.