



NATIONALHISPANICINSTITUTE

## **NHI LEARNING EXPERIENCES --- FEATURES AND BENEFITS**

### **1. NHI expands its members' social networks.**

Participation in NHI experiences creates opportunities to build professional working relationships with college and university admissions representatives, establish communication with over 80,000 alumni worldwide, and make lifelong friendships with peers with similar cultural references, who are college bound and also student leaders. It is common to hear NHI alumni launch businesses, community ventures, and other creative projects together with friends they made in high school or undergraduate studies.

### **2. NHI engages students in discussions and conversations that challenge their thinking.**

By using game-based training, social constructivist models, action-learning principles, and inquiry based learning methods NHI experiences are transformative. They strengthen their members' overall self-confidence, ability to tackle deep and open questions about future challenges opportunities, and they also become comfortable engaging in rigorous debate with peers from across the hemisphere in a competitive yet professional manner. Having the capacity to have your thinking challenged as well challenges others is the type of intangible quality top universities, entrepreneurs, and innovators place a high premium on.

### **3. NHI reinforces the values of family.**

NHI President and Founder Ernesto Nieto rooted the Institute's mission in the work of his parents Santos and Esther who directed community parks in Houston, Texas. Formalizing their approach in working with children, NHI establishes a welcoming and familiar environment for its members. NHI regularly poses a contrast between the values of home life, the mainstream world, as well as their own personal values and future direction. Through games and conversations that explore the beauty and assets the community has to offer, students reflect and are reminded of the core values and lessons learned at home. We often say to new members, "Welcome to the NHI Family!" Additionally, in many communities throughout the U.S. and Mexico, parent and alumni affiliate groups called Family Leadership Academies or Community Leadership Councils carry out NHI's work with families and participants locally.

### **4. NHI training programs place students in different learning scenarios.**

Instead of using traditional learning models like lectures, didactic workshops, and guest speaker presentations, NHI creates fun, game-based learning opportunities. With over thirty years and as the creation of a former classroom educator, NHI has oftentimes students are more likely to learn and adept if the learning experience is high-energy, interactive, social in nature, awards their talents, and makes an impact on their mind set. Whether it is at the communications focused Great Debate or the personal journey in decision-making and vision building at the LDZ, all NHI programs require students to articulate complex ideas and concepts, compete against equally competent peers, improve their language skills and competencies, and think in abstract terms.

### **5. NHI guides students to think beyond their personal career choices and aspirations.**

NHI is interested in growing and developing the community's future leadership talent pool by focusing its energies on high academic achieving youth demonstrating a desire to go to college and take on a future leadership role. While NHI is proud of and promotes its access to and relationships with top colleges and an impressive alumni network, its work is really focused on challenging young people to craft out a leadership role for themselves that extends outside of the traditional definitions of academic, professional, and financial success. Annually working with a top cadre of high school youth, NHI is confident in the academic and professional prowess of its members. NHI alumni define their successes and describe their personal drive beyond the scope of their academic and business resumes.



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The goal is for these potential leaders to be able to articulate and design a leadership vision that creates community opportunity, innovative possibilities, and new initiatives that improve the overall quality of life for themselves and other.

#### **6. NHI increases student skills, competencies, and knowledge in understanding the Latino community.**

NHI is one of the first organization's in the United States to make high academic achieving Latinos its primary audience. Over 30 years since its founding, NHI values the Latino community and the lessons its culture, history, and communities can teach the globe as a dynamic and universal. NHI programs have a historical tradition rooted in Hispanic/Latino culture. Through research, discussions, and projects, NHI alumni not only gain a deeper understanding of Latino community life but also have the opportunity to explore and be exposed to different social perspectives, beliefs, and outlooks on the future. Particularly, as the Western Hemisphere becomes more multilingual and multinational in the areas of commerce, education, innovation, and policy making, having the acumen to engage and create opportunities in Latino communities will be essential for any future leader.

#### **7. NHI provides students with a continuing learning environment.**

NHI is fortunate to have one of the most active alumni volunteer corps of any nonprofit in the U.S. Hundreds of high school upperclassmen, undergraduates, and professionals give of their time to volunteer as NHI staff. Beyond professional NHI faculty and staff, the overwhelming majority of staff members during local and national projects are alumni volunteers and interns. These lifelong learning opportunities allow for continuous learning. Volunteers explore their personal development and preparation as future leaders from high school, through undergraduate studies, and beyond. The NHI "Progressive Leadership Training Model" outlines the leadership lessons one learns from 9<sup>th</sup> grade through professional life. NHI alumni are lifelong learners and are afforded countless chances to volunteer locally and internationally, become coaches and trainers, or intern locally or at headquarters.

#### **8. NHI provides its students with opportunities to travel and study abroad before and during college.**

From his own early experiences journeying throughout Texas, the American Southwest, and Northern Mexico with his family, President and Founder Ernesto Nieto also recognized the importance of traveling to other communities and learning from different cultures and ways of life. All of his children also went on to have abroad experiences throughout Europe and Latin America. Seeing their personal development caused the organization to take an international turn to create NHI experiences throughout the various U.S. and Latin America communities. Additionally, because almost all NHI programs are housed on college campuses, students are able to get a taste of college life as early as freshman year. All of these experiences broaden perspectives and increase comfort with traveling, working on teams with people of different backgrounds, and living away from home.

#### **9. NHI challenges youth to view Latino community life an asset view.**

Too often, the imagery of Latino community life is presented as from the perspective of its potential deficits. NHI rejects this approach is working with youth in leadership by challenging them to create proposals, project designs, entrepreneurial visions, and community intervention programs that are rooted in the community's assets. Constant exposure to the Latino community's deficits can foster a mindset that sees the community as weak, full of problems, and one to exit. Deficit based leadership can lead to too many negative attitudes and oftentimes force leaders to look outside the community for solutions. NHI recognizes the intrinsic value and worth of the community hemisphere-wide. By pushing young people to see the academic, political, social, economic, and cultural wealth within the community they are more likely to become leaders that create new products, businesses and cultural symbols, the cause a shift in perspective that is positive, forward looking, and more culturally aligned with Latino family values.



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**11. NHI introduces its students to Latino literature, music, art, and philosophy as key elements in their social and intellectual development.**

The United States education system is big on multicultural education and diversity. However, many school districts and institutions of higher learning are still seeding these in-school programs. NHI programs weave music, art, and other cultural symbols and components into the curriculum. In addition to deepening their personal cultural and historical education, NHI uses these elements as reference points in their social and intellectual development.

**12. NHI provides its members with continuing opportunities to explore contemporary trends and developments in Latino community life.**

NHI participants and alumni are always being challenged to become innovative, creative, and forward-thinking leaders. Although NHI learning experiences employ inquiry based learning, Socratic methods, and other non-traditional methods as their chief training modalities, empirical research and a study of current global community trends are incorporated. While students are challenge to create and imagine, they are always provided context that charts out societal patterns, new opportunities, waves of growth, and new cultural shifts. NHI leaders learn to make sense of these trends and capitalize on the positive elements to create community wealth prospects.

**13. NHI guides its students to re-craft their understanding of the Latino world.**

It is common for the Latino community to be defined as a collection or conglomerate of nationalities and cultures. NHI espouses a unified Pan-American ideal that view the Latino world as a globally connected community. At NHI experiences, Latino identity is defined broadly, encompassing all histories and traditions from Canada to Tierra del Fuego. Adopting this mindset opens up participants to see themselves as part of a global society and having more future opportunities than their local home community or city may offer.