



# 2022 Impact Report

**Education and Workforce Training to Build a Stronger Wisconsin**

## Our Mission

The Latino Academy of Workforce Development strengthens our diverse communities by providing linguistically and culturally competent adult education programming that advances opportunities to ensure that individuals and families thrive socially, economically, and civically.



## Message from the Executive Director

The Latino Academy should not be limited by geographical boundaries. The Latino Academy was born to be independent, to reach its own potential and now we celebrate our independence. 2022 was the year the Latino Academy became independent. Reflecting back on becoming independent, I go back to the fact that this was most definitely a bold move. A bold move that was driven by the students, the community and the potential of this organization. A move that was a response to the urgency of our community for family sustaining career opportunities. All of us including staff, students, board of directors, funders, partners had the option to keep the Latino Academy as a program of the Vera Court Neighborhood Center and just sit back and relax while the needs for economic advancement kept increasing. But yet we decided to do the hard work, to make a bold move and to invest in the newest Latino-led organization in South-Central Wisconsin. 2022 reminded me of my own immigrant journey in this country. It reminded me of that day 23 years ago when I left my home town in Mexico in search of better opportunities. It reminded me of those nights I traveled through the Mexican-American desert in search of the American Dream. That was a bold move that opened the door to many opportunities. As an immigrant and now a U.S. citizen in this country, I have always listened to the voices that tell me ¡Si Se Puede! Yes you can! This year the Latino Academy received tremendous support from the community and gave testament to the words ¡Si Se Pudo! Yes We Did It! As long as there continues to be a need for economic advancement in the community, as long as our hard working, determined and driven students continue to climb the economic ladder the Latino Academy will continue to make bold moves to ensure that individuals and families thrive socially, economically, and civically.



*Baltazar De Anda Santana*

Executive Director and Co-Founder

## Message from the Board President

I know that in years to come we will reflect back on 2022 as a year that fundamentally changed the workforce development for Latinx/e community, the year in which the Latino Academy of Workforce Development gained its non-profit status under the leadership of our dynamic and innovative Executive Director, Baltazar De Anda Santana. Along with my fellow inaugural Board members, I am proud of the Latino Academy's accomplishments in just one year and look forward to its continued growth as we create a path of economic opportunity for our community in a student-centered and holistic manner.



*Shiva Bidar-Sielaff, MA*

Board President

# Our Story

## Program Birth 2011 - 2012

In 2011, the Latino Academy was created by and for people who were hungry to build Community through Education. Indeed, our students are the co-founders of Latino Academy, a place where our students could find their own potential and where they could feel welcome and respected.

## Growth 2013 - 2020

The Latino Academy created the environment of trust that fosters our students' career advancement. The challenges of learning English, getting a GED, developing computer and equipment skills pale in comparison to the sacrifices they've already made in leaving families and countries. Our students' goals drove us to add GED, ESL, Bilingual Construction, Commercial Drivers License, Bilingual Customer Service, and Workplace Safety programs and we developed these programs to align with industry standards and in partnership with employers. We continually assess our students' language and industry skills throughout programs so they can earn the credentials needed to get jobs. Not just any jobs: we work with our students to find those jobs with good pay plus competitive benefits. Dignified work that leads to career advancement.

## Unlimited Potential 2021 - Beyond

Our students' career ambitions drive Latino Academy forward. In 2022, we became South Central Wisconsin's newest Latino-led independent nonprofit after a decade of growth as a program within the Vera Court Neighborhood Center. We moved to new offices with more convenient classroom access. We're deepening our work with our community, education, and industry partners to align training with what Wisconsin's economy needs now and will need soon. In 2023, we are digging deeper into our data and industry data projections to develop systems that improve our students' program completions, job placements and career promotions. We are forging public and private alliances based on our top priority: what will build career success for our students.

# Programs and Highlights

## Becoming Independent

In February, we celebrated becoming South Central Wisconsin's newest Latino-led nonprofit organization, building on more than a decade of growth as a program within the Vera Court Neighborhood Center and supporting more than 10,000 individuals in providing the region's only bilingual and culturally competent workforce training and adult educational services. We hosted a reception with honored guest Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers and Dane County's business and community leaders. Our independence is just the beginning of our journey to further strengthen our Wisconsin community and provide the pathways for our students to advance and prosper.

## Renacimiento/New Beginnings

In July, fifty-one Commercial Drivers License (CDL) and General Educational Development (GED) graduates were recognized in a friends and family-focused graduation celebration in person for the first time since early 2020. It was our largest ever graduation, celebrating new beginnings—for our students, our community, and for the organization as a newly independent nonprofit organization. Our students have worked harder than ever during the past few years of the pandemic, acquiring additional industry-recognized skills and advancing their education and their careers.

## Community-driven Recognition

In October, the Latino Academy was voted Wisconsin's Nonprofit of the Year at the Wisconsin Leadership Summit, the state's premier professional development, networking and community-building event for people of color. Henry Sanders, publisher of Madison365, shared, "The Latino Academy has consistently shown that when your focus is serving the community, transformation can happen." We celebrate the visibility that this award brings to our Latino families in our community and to all that they contribute to growing Wisconsin's economy.

## Federal Collaboration to Meet Wisconsin's Most Pressing Workforce Needs

In February and in late October, we hosted visits from US Senator Tammy Baldwin and US Department of Labor Secretary Marty Walsh. Our students shared their stories about how the Latino Academy Approach supports their career goals and leads to 80%-100% graduation rates and good jobs. We made the case for creating the Regional Transportation Training Center (RTTC) to address our growing student waitlist and replenish Wisconsin's shrinking trucking workforce. The discussions that started there with Wisconsin's civic and community leaders have led to specific strategies for making the RTTC a reality.

## Innovating with New Programming

More than two years of pandemic disruptions to home, school and the workplace created new degrees of challenges for Dane County Latinas in navigating education and career goals. Inspired and developed by Director of Workforce Development Margarita Avila's own powerful mentorship experiences as an immigrant Latina student, the **Women in the Workplace Mentorship Program** launched in 2022 with generous support from A Fund for Women. Latinas were matched with community female mentors through skills-based workshops, 1-on-1 coaching sessions and group bonding activities. The support went both ways for mentors and mentees over the course of the program, where each learned from each other and built relationships that will maximize career development strategies and confidence.



## Our 2022 Impact by the Numbers:

**2,249**

individuals received instruction and support services.

**201**

participants initiated a career pathway with family sustaining wages plus competitive benefits.

**151**

industry recognized credentials (GED, Commercial Driver's License, ServSafe, Forklift and OSHA-10 hour).

**6,264**

total hours of instruction and support services.



## Looking Ahead: We're focused on where Wisconsin's workforce is going.

The Latino Academy's core focus is industry-aligned workforce development for South Central Wisconsin's Latino and non-Latino adults and young adults. The ultimate measure of our success is good incomes from career-building jobs for our students, not inflated numbers of random interactions. Before any student enrolls in a program, we develop personalized career planning and ensure that students are eligible. Then comes ongoing coaching and mentoring support during and after the education and training process.

How do we choose and develop our industry training tracks? We work closely with employers and regional workforce development boards to identify high-demand industries where short-term training can land our students with good jobs while also remedying Wisconsin's employer workforce shortages. We look at today's Wisconsin workforce needs and also where tomorrow's workforce needs will be.

The Latino Academy is at the table because of our students, building Wisconsin's workforce pipeline in high-demand fields.

# Key approaches in our strategy:

**Achieving our fundraising goal of \$10 million to launch the Regional Transportation Training Center (RTTC).** We're addressing the statewide shortage of commercial truck drivers with this innovative, student-first approach. Our Latino Academy Approach adapts the program for maximum graduation and job placement. Small employers can partner with the RTTC to enroll their employees in our federally-approved CDL program while staying on the job. RTTC services will take place at our training facilities or onsite at the workplace.

## Untapped Workforce Career Fairs

We're expanding our successful career fair series with an emphasis on building relationships between South Central Wisconsin's employers and our students. These events take place across the region so that employers can tap into Wisconsin's fastest-growing population, while our students are introduced to employers with career opportunities.

## Enhancing the Latino Academy Approach

Grassroots word-of-mouth builds our student pipeline and we devote many hours to connecting our students to needed resources and opportunities. We are deepening our data-driven approach to better serve our region and produce even better career results for our students. More career opportunities that offer \$20/hour plus competitive benefits so that parents can work one job instead of two or three and spend more time with their families. This means better insights on attracting and retaining Wisconsin's untapped workforce, and that benefits all of us.

## Robust public-private collaborations that ignite Wisconsin's role in future growth industries

Our students are excited by the expanding range of career opportunities tied to short-term industry-certified training. We're building our place in emerging green industry businesses and small business development to ensure that our students are not left out of promising new industries.





## Student Testimonials

“The Financial Education series helped me to know how to manage my credit card, to refinance my house, manage my child care business and my personal finances.” –Leonor Dominguez

“Accessible education and childcare support for my son so I could obtain my CDL and a better job in the future – I could not give up!” –Miriam Morales, 2020 CDL graduate and current Dane County Highway Department employee.



“The Latino Academy’s GED program provided the bridge to continue with my studies. I received my GED in 2020 and am now a student in my final semester at Madison College, preparing to be a personal trainer and open my own business.”  
—Alejandro Cayetano

“Latino Academy helped me advance my career. I took English as a second language classes, CPR classes, Leadership training, Nutrition classes and their career support services helped me get a good job here in Dane County. My son also took construction and CPR classes. Latino Academy invested in us. As newcomers in 2019, it would have been impossible to build our careers without their support.”  
—Cielo Lazo

“I have been attending ESL classes at Latino Academy for two semesters. Last time I went to the doctor they asked me if I needed an interpreter and I told them I didn’t need one, that I could do it by myself. That was the first time I did it on my own, and I was able to make myself understood.”  
—María Lourdes Flores



# The Story of Our 2022 Impact Is The Story of our Students

Our work builds on all of our partners. But first, it starts with our students, our number one partners.

We work with private and public partners and across all educational and community service sectors to build the career opportunities that our students seek. **THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTNERS.**

Check our website for our list of partners—the list is growing and we want you to join us.



**Your support builds careers in Wisconsin!**

## Board of Directors

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Associate Dean, Madison College

**Salvador Carranza**

Retired, System Administrator, University of Wisconsin System



In 2023, we now have a central location for our staff to meet and expand our continuum of services and support to the community.

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