ABSTRACT

Texas A&M International University and Laredo Community College are both located in Laredo, Texas. They are the only institutions of higher education within a 100-mile radius and serve an area in South Texas comprised of Webb, Jim Hogg, Maverick, Uvalde, LaSalle and Zapata counties. The institutions serve as the intellectual centers of a vibrant bilingual, bicultural community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2000, Webb County alone had 193,117 inhabitants: 94.1% Hispanic and 30.1% living below poverty level. In 2000, additional growth of colonias (poverty areas outside the city lacking basic amenities such as water and sewer service) showed a poverty status for this rural population of 47.3%. TAMIU is the lead institution in this cooperative development grant. The contact person is Dr. Miroslava Vargas, mvargas@tamiu.edu, 956-326-2684.

Activity: Hispanic Student Success Initiative - Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers Today

TAMIU has been serving the postsecondary education needs of Laredo for over thirty years. Demands for a greater number of teachers for area schools and increased educational standards from external certification agencies have increasingly impeded admission of incoming and transferring students (generated primarily from LCC) to TAMIU’s College of Education. One of the greatest obstacles for students is passing the University Writing Assessment. Both institutions have struggled with this problem and have met to align curriculum, especially in English composition, which is troublesome for many students who are native Spanish speakers. The proposed program will improve the writing proficiency of students during their first two years of college by providing technological and pedagogical opportunities for passing the writing assessment. Additionally, students will be provided with laptop computers and software to improve their writing skills. The program will also improve transfer requirements for entrance into the College of Education.

Component One: To increase the number of students admitted into the College of Education

By creating a cohort of students at the college and university and exposing them to numerous experiences including but not limited to summer writing camps, field trips and reading center/writing center assistance, students will increase their chances of meeting the entry requirements for the College of Education. Key Measures: The number of students entering the College of Education from TAMIU and LCC transfer students will increase by 5% per year from baseline.

Component Two: To strengthen the advisement system and retention effort

By providing a support system that has a structured tracking system with ongoing assessment, evaluation and advisement, students that would have normally dropped out of college during the first year, will be retained. Key Measures: 1) As part of an orientation program, 100% percent of entering freshman from LCC will have the opportunity to participate in orientation activities, 2) Course completion rates will increase by 2% per year from the baseline and 3) Time for completion of developmental course sequence will be reduced from baseline.

Component Three: Development of Seamless Transfer System

A comprehensive system will be designed to assist students with advisement, placement, registration, financial aid, and degree audits at both institutions. This system will become the model for other shared degree programs. Key Measure: The number of students that enter the College of Education from TAMIU and LCC (transfer students) will increase by 5% per year from baseline.

Total Budget: Approximately $650,000/year. The distribution is approximately 20% endowment, 23% management, 1% evaluation, 38% personnel and 18% equipment.