

Program Manager for the Center to Counter Human Trafficking (CCHT)

Manuel Guillen Jr. currently serves as the Program Manager for the Center to Counter Human Trafficking (CCHT) at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU). In this leadership role, he oversees program administration, strategic planning, grant management, budgeting, research coordination, and partnership development across multi-institutional collaborations. He supervises a multicultural team of research staff, faculty affiliates, and graduate assistants, ensuring the Center's research and community impact align with national and state-level anti-trafficking efforts.

Mr. Guillen's professional expertise spans higher education leadership, grant administration, behavioral health crisis intervention, and STEM education. He previously held multiple leadership roles in higher education, including Assistant Director of the Building SCHOLARS Grant and Interim Project Director for the STEM Grant at Laredo College. During his tenure, he played a critical role in transforming developmental education through the implementation of Supplemental Instruction (SI) models for both Mathematics and English. Additionally, he was instrumental in supporting the Manuel Blanco Writing Center, strengthening academic support services across campus. His efforts in undergraduate research capacity-building earned him the STEM Community Award, recognizing his contribution to the development of the STEM Learning Lab and federally funded grant initiatives.

Prior to his work in higher education, Mr. Guillen served at the Border Region Behavioral Health Center as a Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) Counselor. In this role, he provided crisis screenings,

intervention strategies, safety planning, relapse prevention, and coordinated hospitalizations, collaborating closely with families, hospitals, and law enforcement to ensure timely care for individuals experiencing mental health crises. His experience in behavioral health further deepens his expertise in supporting vulnerable populations and addressing complex community needs.

His early career experience also includes work in K-12 education, where he taught Chemistry, Pre-AP Chemistry, Advanced Physics, and Integrated Physics & Chemistry. Additionally, he served as a Family Coordinator, directly supporting special education students and families through translation services, ARD meeting facilitation, and mental health advocacy. His contributions to social-emotional learning were recognized through a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Award during his tenure in secondary education.

Currently a doctoral candidate in P-20 Educational Leadership, Mr. Guillen's research interests include STEM education pathways, special education leadership, human development, grant program effectiveness, and the intersection of higher education and workforce development. His dissertation research employs quantitative approaches to assess the impact of STEM grant programs on student transfer and success outcomes, utilizing data from institutional, state, and federal education systems.

Mr. Guillen holds a Master of Science in Psychology, with extensive coursework in research methodology, cognitive psychology, and quantitative analysis, and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology with minors in Chemistry and English. As part of his undergraduate journey, he was a member of the university's Honors Program, founder and first president of the TACHE (Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education) student chapter at Laredo College and completed a thesis

examining leadership inadequacies in the K-12 system for special education. His multidisciplinary training informs his holistic approach to research, leadership, and student success initiatives.

Through his work at the intersection of research, education, behavioral health, and public service, Mr. Guillen remains committed to advancing equitable access to education, supporting vulnerable populations, and developing innovative solutions for complex societal challenges.

