

Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program FY 2008 Project Abstracts

ARIZONA

Estrella Mountain Community College - P031S080118

Activity Description:

Building A Learning College Through Engagement

Estrella Mountain Community College (EMCC) is an independently accredited college serving approximately 13,000 students annually from the west and southwest portions of Maricopa County in the Phoenix metropolitan area. EMCC is a member of the Maricopa County Community College District, which serves nearly 286,000 students each year throughout its ten colleges.

Based on consideration of available research and its own needs and opportunities, EMCC is making a dramatic transition from a culture driven by full-time student equivalent (FTSE) growth to one more based on **Teaching, Learning and Caring (TLC)** as the core driver for decision-making processes. EMCC feels it is imperative that we develop processes that assess student-learning outcomes and document how student-learning assessment impacts curriculum improvement. Beyond that, this proposal fosters and supports a new and exciting culture represented by a true “Learning College.”

Four areas of concentration were developed. These are: **Preparation, Engagement, Transforming Culture, and Endowment**. Activity goals have been developed to compliment institutional goals. These Activity Goals are to: (1) Provide infrastructure to build improved placement, learner preparation, and improvement in over-all learner success; (2) Increase student engagement campus-wide; (3) Transform and cultivate a campus climate and culture to infuse students, improve student learning, and include all college constituencies; and (4) Build and strategically align the endowment support for student goal attainment.

Phoenix College - P031S080044

Activity Description:

Achieving Academic Success

Phoenix College (PC) is a large, public, two-year Hispanic-Serving Institution that provides postsecondary education for an ethnically diverse student population in central Phoenix, Arizona.

Project Purpose: This capacity building project seeks to achieve and maintain institutional self-sufficiency by focusing on increasing student academic success so that students complete college-level courses successfully and persist from semester to semester. Developing or obtaining resources to address deficiencies in skill mastery and content knowledge will enhance college-level “gatekeeper” courses. Gatekeeper courses are generally found in discipline areas that are taught sequentially and are required pre-requisites for other higher-level courses in the same disciplines as well as majors in other areas. Hispanic students have lower rates of success in biology, chemistry, and mathematics gatekeeper courses than non-Hispanic students.

The project is also designed to increase student interest and access to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) careers and to build new programs for the future including new Environmental Science courses, more online and hybrid courses, and a Title V endowment that will be used to develop new programs in the future. To better prepare incoming students for academic success, the college also proposes to develop the Academic Success Awareness Program, which will alert new students about college expectations and keys to academic success at the college level.

CALIFORNIA

California State University, Monterey Bay - P031S080138

Activity Description:

California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB), a young and growing Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) with a commitment to underserved and underrepresented populations will utilize Title V funds to provide direct services to nearly 600 at-risk students annually. Targeting students needing remediation, “academically deficient” probationary students and other at-risk populations with intrusive, intentional services, we will increase retention rates 5-7 percent over the course of the grant.

California State University, Monterey Bay’s unique position in the tri-county area positions us to face the benefits and challenges of HSI campuses, attracting educationally underserved students and shrinking state resources. We are not yet old enough as an institution to have a large private donor base. This grant project has been crafted to foster high levels of institutional performance in the support of at-risk students and guarantee institutionalization of services upon grant completion. It is imperative that CSUMB overcome the challenges faced by HSIs and provide opportunities for historically disadvantaged students to achieve degree success.

Los Angeles Trade-Technical College - P031S080117

Activity Description:

Engaging Students and Faculty in Technology

Founded in 1925, Los Angeles Trade Tech College (LATTC), the oldest of the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) colleges, is unique in its mission to respond to the needs of industry to provide post-secondary vocational training. Fall 2006 enrollment at LATTC was 13,855 with **Hispanic enrollment at 59.6 percent**. The majority of students attending LATTC do not have the skills necessary for academic success, and the college has failed to respond effectively to the problem of student under-preparedness.

The proposed project has a single activity: **Engaging Students and Faculty in Technology**. This activity focuses on five integrated strategies critical to improving the success of Hispanic and low-income students: (1) strengthening the technology infrastructure capacity including the creation of Multi-Media Technology and Training Center; (2) implementation of a faculty Professional Development technology initiative; (3) development of Student Learning Objectives for technology engagement; (4) development of Reusable Learning Objects and hybrid courses to provide students with interactive Web-based resources; and (5) piloting Summer Technology Academies for first-time students incorporating e-Portfolios to utilize Web integration and student progress tracking capabilities.

Palomar Community College - P031S080049

Activity Description:

Strengthening Student Retention and Success at Palomar College

Palomar College is a comprehensive two-year, public community college located in San Marcos, California, 30 miles north of San Diego and 12 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. In fall 2006, Palomar College enrolled 31,058 students. Just over 28 percent of Palomar College students are Hispanic.

Palomar College has developed a comprehensive five-year plan to improve Hispanic and low-income student retention and academic success. The key components and directions of the plan include: value diversity; forge strong connections to the college; increase family support for college; set an educational goal; implement academic interventions; strengthen teaching methodology; and ensure that students have adequate access to financial aid. To implement this five-year plan, the Palomar College Title V Planning Committee identified the following project goals: (1) Increase the academic achievement and success of at-risk students by enhancing their awareness of and access to academic support services; (2) Increase the academic achievement and success of first-year students by enhancing their engagement in the learning process; (3) Increase the academic retention, persistence and success of Hispanic and low-income students by enhancing counselor and faculty access to student educational planning information; (4) Improve student retention, persistence and success by expanding professional development opportunities for all faculty/staff to enhance the quality of academic and student services; (5) Improve student retention and timely program completion by implementing an enrollment management tool that supports program, budget and enrollment planning and management; and (6) Strengthen fiscal stability by building the College endowment.

San Jose City College - P031S080014

Activity Description:

METAS: Motivate, Enhance, & Transfer for Academic Success

San Jose City College (SJCC) is a two-year public community college that serves a concentration of Hispanic and low-income households in central urban San Jose, California.

San Jose City College will strengthen programs by employing strategies that target Hispanic students, increase the success of Hispanic students in English as a Second Language (ESL), improve students' basic skills, enhance the ability of Hispanic students to reach graduation and transfer, and improve faculty and staff's capacity to support Hispanic student success.

The project will: (1) build academic support programs that provide supplemental instruction such as tutoring, learning communities, special study groups, and workshops; (2) create special orientations for students, involve parents, and strengthen counseling and follow-up for students; and (3) provide professional development to assist faculty and staff in implementing best practices and evaluating the effect of the implementations.

COLORADO

Trinidad State Junior College - P031S080052

Activity Description:

Development, Technology, and Student Success

Trinidad State Junior College (TSJC), the oldest two-year, public college in Colorado is a public, Hispanic-serving institution. TSJC is proposing a Title V Individual Institution Project to provide improved *Development, Technology, and Student Success* for TSJC students in a ten-county region of Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico.

Goals: *Development, Technology, Student Success* is a single activity; designed to improve academic attainment of Hispanic, low-income and at-risk students. The activity will create new professional *development* opportunities for faculty and staff; improve the *technology* access in classrooms and create new academic support resources for *student success*. Activity goals include:

Development: a professional development program for faculty and staff will be developed and implemented to improve institutional capacity;

Technology: improved technology and design in twenty-eight traditional classrooms will create optimal academic instruction opportunities for students; improve enrollment, retention and graduation rates;

Student Success: new and enhanced academic support programs including and intervention program for at-risk students, resource center for coordinated assessment and distance learning proctors for all distance learning courses offered throughout the grant period. Improvements will ensure increased enrollment, retention, graduation and transfer rates.

FLORIDA

Miami Dade College, Inter-American Campus - P031S080080

Activity Description:

ACE: Accelerated Content-Based English

The ACE Project: Accelerated Content-Based English project will develop and test a model designed to increase student enrollment, retention, and success in the critical English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program.

The ACE Project consists of two major activities: (1) creating and implementing an accelerated EAP program as a pilot project; and (2) assessing its effectiveness. The immediate beneficiaries will be 525 college-bound EAP students with strong academic backgrounds in their native languages; a cohort that research indicates has the potential for success in a fast-track EAP program. Such resident immigrants constitute the majority of EAP students at IAC, and their numbers are projected to grow with Hispanic immigration to the United States. To increase program enrollment and retention, the ACE Project will design curriculum and assessments for a condensed EAP program infused with college-level content, develop specialized integrated ACE student services, train faculty and staff in the new curriculum and student services model, and implement improved learning and management technology. Long-term, the benefits of an evidence-based accelerated program will extend to students throughout MDC and nationwide.

Activity Description:

Connecting Increased Student Engagement with Improved Outcomes to Shape Student Success

Providing effective teaching/learning programs and services, especially to Hispanic and under-prepared students, has always been a focus of Nova Southeastern University (NSU). However, extensive national and institutional research and planning have inspired an institution-wide effort to engage in a collaborative community of learning for undergraduate students that aspires to achieve student success similar to the institution's nationally-recognized graduate/first professional programs.

Activity goals and strategies will include: (1) creating competency-based transition and gateway programs and services that accurately assess and place students, improve student success, and build competence; (2) building new capabilities for continuous improvement in teaching/learning through professional development activities that foster and inform a learning-centered approach to working with under-prepared, diverse students and a culture of evidence across the curriculum; (3) linking responsive advisement and faculty mentoring more closely to the first-year transition process, integrating support services into curriculum, delivery, and evaluation, and supporting increased collaboration among academic and support service staff to better serve under-prepared students and to achieve shared responsibility for student success; (4) increasing use of student learning outcomes data and the coordinated use of technology in the development of effective curriculum and instructional approaches, and the systematic evaluation of institutional effectiveness of programs and services; and (5) strengthening outreach to Hispanic and other underserved, diverse communities in order to increase enrollment, preparation for, and success in college. Key measurable Activity outcomes relative to strengthening NSU's capacity as a Hispanic-serving institution include increasing retention and graduation rates and decreasing academic probation or suspension rates through increased student engagement in learning as measured by national benchmarks (NSSE).

St. Thomas University - P031S080066

Activity Description:

The Initiative for Student Success (ISS): Student Academic Development and Retention

1. This activity seeks to improve student retention and increase persistence through graduation, and includes acquisition of information technologies and retention software used to assess, monitor and track student progress and support teaching and learning opportunities, renovation of centralized space for services, and training and development for faculty and staff in the use of systems to support retention efforts.
2. The second component includes evaluation of learning deficits of entering (freshmen and transfer) students with 'at risk' profiles, the development and delivery of remedial services to meet their academic and advising needs, and activation of a system to track progress from entry through graduation.
3. The third component includes the delivery of follow-through academic services to support continuing students who received remedial services, and services to others identified as having 'at risk' profiles. Student progress is monitored continuously, and individuals are advised, in a timely manner, to access needed support services. Services are delivered via tutoring and mentoring, a writing and information technology skills development center, and through remedial teaching and learning courses and courseware.
4. A fourth component is designed to deliver additional social and personal services tailored to the needs of Hispanic and low-income students. These services include: counseling (family and personal); assistance with issues of financial aid and supplemental employment; and career and occupational counseling.

NEW JERSEY

New Jersey City University - P031S080090

Activity Description:

Increasing Institutional Capacity in Academic Support Services and Faculty Development

New Jersey City University (NJCU) is located in Jersey City, New Jersey, in the most densely populated county of the most densely populated state in the nation. New Jersey City University is the only public, four-year Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) in New Jersey, as well as the only state university with an explicit urban focus.

Activity One, Improving Math & Science Outcomes with the Emerging Scholars Program. Over the course of the project, 1000 freshmen will be randomly assigned to participate in the Emerging Scholars program, which involves three strands: (1) Emerging Scholars Mathematics and Science sections with Supplemental Instruction for gatekeeper courses; (2) Emerging Scholars First-Year Experience Courses with embedded meta-cognitive skill training; (3) Emerging Scholars Advisement Sessions, which include academic counseling, structured scheduling, and use of career planning software. Outcomes will be examined using an external evaluator and rigorous experimental design to show statistically significant increases in year-to-year persistence rates of participants, decreases in grades of F and W in gatekeeper courses, decreases in dismissals and probations, increases in mathematics and science majors, and an increase in graduation rates.

Activity Two, Improving the Capacity of the Center for Teaching and Learning.

This is related to the university's long-range goal to improve the capacity of the faculty to work with under-prepared students and carry out its vision to become a nationally recognized leader in urban public higher education. In Activity Two we propose to increase the capacity of our newly formed Center for Teaching and Learning through an intensive faculty development program with Distinguished Visiting Scholars and Faculty Fellows.

NEW YORK

Bronx Community College - P031S080057

Activity Description:

An Integrated Instructional Technology Development Program

Activity A: Development of Faculty Instructional Capability

At the conclusion of the five-year grant period, all 15 academic departments and five cross-departmental programs will have defined technology proficiency standards and learning outcomes, undertaken systematic training, and implemented and assessed their strengthened, technology-enriched courses and curricula.

Activity B: Student Technology Mentor Development

At the conclusion of the grant period, a Student Technology Mentor Program will be implemented and institutionalized. Student Technology Mentors will help faculty with classroom-based projects and online coursework, troubleshoot technical difficulties faculty may encounter, and tutor their peers—both face-to-face and online—in technology skills and in specific subjects.

Activity C: Coordinated Infrastructure Development

At the conclusion of the grant period, 60 instructional areas, more than half of the campus total, will be equipped to deliver technology-enhanced courses. This will result from newly instituted academic planning processes designed to strengthen and balance the distribution of instructional resources.

PUERTO RICO

Atlantic College - P031S080121

Activity Description:

Expansion of Hispanic Educational Opportunities through Academic Program Development

Atlantic College, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, is located near Puerto Rico's metropolitan area, founded in 1985, accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), is designated as a four-year private institution with 843 students; and is the only institution of higher education in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean dedicated to the Graphic Arts, Design & Technology.

Activity: To expand low-income, first-generation Hispanic student access to higher education opportunities by the development of two new Bachelor of Science degrees, not currently offered in Puerto Rico, that respond to market/labor/employment needs of Puerto Rico and the United States. This activity allows the institution to expand undergraduate academic program offerings through the development of two undergraduate Bachelor of Science degrees: B.S. in Art & Design of Video Games and B.S. in Digital Animation.

Humacao Community College - P031S080037

Activity Description:

Located in Humacao, Puerto Rico, Humacao Community College (HCC) is an independent, nonprofit two-year institution. HCC offers nine occupational degree and four certificate programs. The mission of HCC is to “*prepare youths and adults through educational means of excellence that promote their whole development and their effective performance in the occupational world.*”

Activity: *Apoyo al de Aqui: New and Expanded Degree Programs* “*Apoyo al de Aqui*” means “supporting our own” and is the theme for our Title V proposal to strengthen our institution and to support residents in the Humacao area with real opportunities for improving their socio-economic condition. We request funds to: (1) construct and equip additional classrooms and a science lab; (2) provide personnel and resources to develop and expand new degree programs; and (3) offer flexible course times for general education courses.

Universidad del Turabo - P031S080071

Activity Description:

Activity I: To establish a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program to increase proficiency of its students at different stages of their development in order to increase the retention rates of undergraduate students who are academically, economically and socially disadvantaged.

Goal #1: To Improve the Writing Skills of Students in Order to Strengthen Academic Performance that Will Result in Increased Retention Rates. The writing program will create and support a comprehensive writing-across-the-curriculum initiative and strengthen engagement with writing on all levels in four major disciplines (Humanities, Social Sciences, Spanish, and English).

Goal #2: To Implement Faculty Development Strategies to Strengthen Engagement with Writing Across the Curriculum in Four Major Disciplines (Humanities, Social Sciences, Spanish and English). The writing program will play a central part in conducting workshops and seminars to help faculty apply “writing across the curriculum” (WAC) concepts and create partnerships to improve teaching and learning. Universidad del Turabo will enhance the capacity of the faculty to improve the writing skills of 50 percent of the students. Faculty participants will develop, after training, a Professor’s Guide to integrate writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom, and other workshop materials.

Activity II: To establish a Comprehensive Student Support Center (CSSC) to increase the retention rates of freshmen students who are academically, economically and socially disadvantaged.

Goal #3: To Improve Personal and Occupational Development Skills and Services in Order to Enhance Student Persistence and Retention. The institution proposes the establishment and development of a Comprehensive Student Support Center (CSSC) that will provide Occupational Planning, Personal Counseling and Health Services.

Universidad del Turabo, Isabela - P031S080045

Activity Description:

Goal 1: To Improve the Success Rates of Students in High-Risk Courses Through Supplemental Instruction To Strengthen Student Retention (Activity 1) – This activity will attend the academic needs of students in high risk courses that contribute to low retention rates, with negative effects on graduation rates and general fiscal stability focusing on improving student success rates in introductory, gate-keeper, and bottleneck courses, strengthening faculty teaching methodology, and increasing students' retention rates.

Goal 2: To Enhance Personal and Career Development Skills and Services to Improve Student Retention (Activity 2) - This will be achieved through the construction, development and implementation of a Comprehensive Student Support Center.

Goal 3: To Implement a Faculty Development Training Program in the Use and Integration of Technology in the Classroom (Activity 3). Key objectives include: (a) increase to 80 percent, the number of faculty trained in the use and integration of computer technology to classroom instruction at the Basic level; (b) increase by at least 75 percent, the number of IUC faculty trained in the use of instructional technology and its instructional application; and (c) provide infrastructure facilities for the Faculty Development Center.

University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez - P031S080124

Activity Description:

Center for Resources in General Education: Towards Student Success in General and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education

University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez (UPRM) is a bilingual public Land-grant university established in 1911, located in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. UPRM is a part of the Puerto Rican State University system, which is composed of 11 campuses throughout the island.

We propose the creation of a *Resource Center in General Education* (RCGE) to provide a new integrated perspective in General and STEM education at UPRM, and to facilitate student success through various learning opportunities. The RCGE will bring together faculty from Agricultural Sciences Arts and Sciences, Business Administration and Engineering in order to develop activities that provide interdisciplinary and global perspectives to UPRM's General Education. The center will challenge the traditional classification of “*technical skills*” vs. “*soft skills*,” substituting it by an emphasis on the development of the *professional and global skills* as described in UPRM's Student Learning Outcomes. The center's activities will focus on two main parts: (1) ***Paths to Student Success***; and (2) ***Sustainable Context to Improve STEM Skills*** with the use of student-learning modules tying the activities together.

Activity One is composed of the Writing Support Center, the Community Outreach Program, and the Student Learning Module Programs and will attend to the academic support and development of both the UPRM students (especially those at risk) and K-12 students of Puerto Rico.

Activity Two presents the balance among the economic, social and environmental dimensions of energy and agriculture, providing a learning context that motivates our students with STEM-related activities and deepens their General Education skills. This activity also includes the renovation of facilities for a much needed Ph.D. Program in Tropical Agriculture. The institutionalization of this initiative will occur as UPRM embraces the new interdisciplinary perspective beyond year five, by supporting liaison faculty in each college who will maintain links to other colleges and continue supporting the liberal education at UPRM through interdisciplinary General Education activities from the RCGE.

Universidad Metropolitana - P031S080108

Activity Description:

Universidad Metropolitana was founded in 1980 and is a four-year private Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Activity 1: *The First-Year College Experience Enhanced: Building Blocks to Turn Under-Prepared Hispanic Freshmen into College Graduates* is built upon our commitment to solve the following problems identified in the CDP: (1) Under-preparedness of entering students and the need for innovative pedagogy; (2) deficient academic management infrastructure to support the First-Year College Experience; (3) disjointed academic and student support services to promote academic achievement and retention; and (4) lack of a strong faculty and staff development initiative to foster academic preparedness, retention and graduation of low-income Hispanic freshmen . The activity has three interrelated components: (1) Reengineering of the First-Year College Experience; (2) Revamping of the Faculty & Staff Development Program; and (3) Implementation of a Full Circle Student Tracking & Reporting System.

TEXAS

Palo Alto College - P031S080101

Activity Description:

PROJECT CONEXIÓN (Connection)

San Antonio, Texas, emerged after the 2000 Census as one of the largest, fastest growing and most Hispanic cities in the nation. San Antonio is now the seventh largest city in the United States (population of 1,144,646).

Palo Alto College has three activities:

- I) Developing Faculty through Evidence and Innovation & Alignment of High School/College Curriculum through in the Creation of the Center for Teaching & Learning;
- II) Improving Low Graduation, Job Placement, and Transfer Rates through Creation of the Center for Academic Transitions; and
- III) Increasing External Gifts and Monies through Establishment of the Alumni/Advancement Initiative.

Southwest Texas Junior College - P031S080081

Activity Description:

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Activity 1 - Improving Student Success

Southwest Texas Junior College (STJC) proposes to develop programs and services that are specifically designed to assist students in timely and successful completion of developmental education courses and in identified “gatekeeper” courses. This activity is divided into two components: (1) Implementation of a Student Engagement Program (SEP), which incorporates an intrusive student advisement system for early intervention for at-risk students. The SEP will provide students with a variety of services and tools designed to improve their engagement and ultimate success in developmental education and gatekeeper courses; and (2) Establish a college-level English as a Second Language (ESL) program that promotes the retention and success of non-native speakers of English who have come to STJC seeking a college education.

Activity 2 - Creating a Learning-Centered Organization

This activity also includes two components: (1) improving the college’s communication infrastructure and its capacity to collect and analyze data in a timely and accurate manner for the development of a “culture of evidence.” This component is important in our desire to encourage and advance data driven decision making – especially as it relates to the assessment of student learning; and (2) Provide professional development opportunities that assist faculty and staff in creating and implementing programs and services that are designed to embrace the philosophy, development and ultimate adoption of the principles associated with a “learning centered organization.” The focus of this activity is to further develop and enhance the college database systems for administration and faculty for a more coordinated, streamlined, and focused response to Students Success issues, allow for more flexible and expedient response to current and emerging issues, and enhancing data recovery and reporting.

Sul Ross State University - P031S080051

Activity Description:

High Impact Practices to Improve Student Success

A public, liberal admissions four-year postsecondary institution located in Alpine, Texas, Sul Ross State University is a historically Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) serving slightly more Hispanic (48 percent) than White, Non-Hispanic (42 percent) students.

PROJECT ACTIVITY: *High Impact Practices to Improve Student Success.* We will address low academic success and low persistence among first-year and second-year students through *high impact practices* to better engage and support students, particularly at-risk, low-income and Hispanic students.

First-Year and Second-Year Experience (FYSYE) Learning Communities (LCs). We will develop and pilot First-Year Experience and Second-Year Experience Learning Communities. The *FYSYE Learning Community* activity centers on designing, developing and piloting discipline-focused and course-linked Learning Communities (math/science focus Y1-2; writing/literature focus Y3; social science/humanities focus Y4; and communications/fine arts focus Y5) to promote greater student engagement to increase success and persistence rates. We will support the *FYSYE Learning Community* activity with an improved, proactive advising system which includes: (1) an FYSYE-focused advising center with resources; (2) peer mentoring and use of graduate assistants as “Pack Leaders” to conduct weekly sessions to reinforce study skills and social integration as part of the LC; (3) student e-portfolios and tracking technology so students can chart their progress; and (4) a summer intensive orientation for the FYSYE students who will be enrolled in pilots of FYSYE LCs. Support for faculty professional development in best practices for designing and teaching Learning Communities, including use of Computer-Based Learning in the LC courses, will be provided. Advising staff and first-year and second-year faculty advisers will be trained in best practices in proactive advising.

The University of Texas, Brownsville - P03IS080128

Activity Description:

The University of Texas at Brownville (UTB) is located in Brownville, Texas, and serves a student population of over 15,000, of which 93 percent are Hispanic. UTB's service area is among one of the poorest in the nation and pervasive to it are language and economic barriers that impede students' formation of a solid foundation in reading and communication. UTB has identified the need to expand students' communication and information literacy skills, to integrate the use of technology, and to strengthen faculty development in order to improve the learning outcomes of eligible students receiving the Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG).

Analysis of persistence trends among entering freshman revealed that a high number of these students are failing or dropping out by the end of their freshmen year (40 percent attrition), with others demonstrating deficiencies in communication and/or literacy skills. UTB will pilot integrated learning communities that link English and Speech courses with Biology or Chemistry courses and reform curriculum delivery to impact literacy, critical and abstract thinking, and problem solving skills. Cross-disciplinary faculty teams will establish common themes and learning outcomes in each course, and design activities intended to improve student reading, writing, rhetoric and information literacy skills and increase student success in SMART related programs and courses. Learning communities will be structured in block schedules that include co curricular activities and student support services, including peer mentoring, supplemental instruction, and teaching assistants in targeted courses.

Faculty will participate in professional development workshops to learn to adequately assess and analyze student learning, integrate technology into their courses, and re-evaluate instructional delivery methods. A Learning Innovations Scholarly Technology Advancement laboratory will be created to provide faculty with a physical location to access resources, technical support, and encourage interactive opportunities for sharing pedagogical methods and working in groups. An instructional designer will provide technical assistance in redesigning courses and aligning learning objectives with program and course expectations. Learning community experts, learning outcomes assessment authorities, technology consultants, and student support service scholars will provide workshops to train faculty and staff and guide curricular reform efforts.

Critical to the success of this project is the assessment of student learning outcomes to determine the impact of curricular reform. UTB will use the Blackboard Management System Outcomes platform to synthesize academic data, utilize e-Portfolios, and catalog student artifacts to be assessed against expected outcomes. Technology consultation is essential to effective implementation and use of outcomes and its assessment tools.

University of Houston, Downtown - P031S080126

Activity Description:

The University of Houston-Downtown is a four-year, urban university with a multicultural enrollment of approximately 11,500 students.

ACTIVITY ONE: University of Houston, Downtown (UHD) Interdisciplinary Learners' Community (ILC) through Problem-Based Learning. The ILC is a single activity designed to foster active learning among first-time-in-college students to increase their success in graduating from UHD and joining the knowledge-based workforce of Houston, a diverse, international city. The ILC students will be capable of testing into college level classes, as opposed to needing developmental classes. Institutional data show that most entering freshmen are first-generation college students, often lacking awareness and analytical skills essential to academic and career achievement. Considerable national research indicates that learning communities have been successful in acculturating students to the university and stimulating student success. Documentation identifies project-based learning (PBL) as a major factor in honing the analytical expertise of students, mostly in STEM programs.

This activity will lead to increased Hispanic and other low-income students in all disciplines continuing and completing their higher education and launching their careers. Faculty development activities are used to increase implementation of problem-based learning and to rethink conventional approaches to curricula. ILC students attend a special summer orientation and receive advising, counseling and mentoring. These initiatives remain consistent with the goals of UHD's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP): *Student Engagement through Active Learning Strategies*. The ILC has eight components: (1) inner-city high school outreach; (2) week-long freshman summer camp; (3) problem-based linked classes; (4) peer educators' (5) course sequences; (6) academic advising/counseling; (7) redesigned freshman seminars; and (8) interactive Web site.

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