AACSU Project
Contributors to Success in Retention and Graduation for Latino/Hispanic Students

A.
The Tutoring and Learning Center

A.1
The Tutoring and Learning Center has been in operation for the last twelve (12) years. It opened its doors in 1994.

A.2
The aim of the Tutoring and Learning Center (TLC) is simply to provide academic support services to all university students and that aim has not changed over the years. It has become one of the more highly regarded academic departments at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. TLC programs reinforce the university’s vision and mission to help retain and graduate students of high potential; especially those from groups who have been historically under-represented in South Texas higher education. Hispanic students receiving tutoring have increased their GPA, and retention and graduation rates have increased as well.

A.3
The source of funding for the Tutoring and Learning Center is state, local, as well as student fees, and student services funding in the amount of $154,838.24.

A.4
In 2005-06 the number of Hispanic students receiving assistance from the Tutoring and Learning Center was 1,108 different students with a grand total of 6,124 visits, and 9063 hours. TLC works with most of the faculty including the co-directors that are involved with the First-Year Learning Communities Program. TLC also works directly with the department chairs from the English, Math and Reading departments.

The aim of the program has not changed over time and most recently, the TLC has played an important part in the University’s efforts to support the state’s “Closing the Gaps” initiative. TLC offers a wide range of programs that use peer tutoring to support students. The center’s major areas of tutoring are Math and Science. In collaboration with the Department of English, TLC operates the University’s Writing Center. In addition, TLC coordinates the Supplemental Instruction Program, and the Academic Student Achievement Plan (ASAP) identifying students who need developmental course work, placing them in appropriate courses, and supporting them with tutoring, academic counseling and guidance. Special attention is given to Hispanic students that have been identified as being at-risk. The TLC is successful in large part because it promotes professional development of the full and part-time staff, and all tutors. All of the TLC tutors have achieved 100% certification through the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), ensuring a unique instructional delivery system, effective outcomes, and constant evaluation and assessments. Our commitment to excellence, through professional development earned the “Tutoring Excellence Award” from The
National Tutoring Association, recognizing the TLC’s outstanding work and dedication to our students.

A.5
The Tutoring and Learning Center full-time staff includes the Director, an Assistant Director that is responsible for the management of the tutoring program, two (2) academic intervention specialists, one (1) retention specialist, one (1) business support specialist that is responsible for the daily operations of TLC office. 100% of the full-time staff are Hispanic. There are approximately 60 tutors working for TLC and, 27% of the student workers providing academic support services are Hispanic.

A.6
To enhance effectiveness across the campus, TLC has formed partnerships in the past with several different programs and organizations who share TLC’s strong commitment to student success.

• The Title III and Title V Federal Grant Programs allied themselves with the Tutoring and Learning Center to help with the center’s recruitment and training of tutors. The partnership also included assistance with the hiring of an Academic Intervention Specialist who worked part-time with TLC, assisting with advising and counseling of at-risk and under prepared students. The partnership was so successful that the university institutionalized the position and assigned it on a permanent basis to the Tutoring and Learning Center. The Academic Intervention Specialist is Hispanic.

• TLC cooperated with a Title V initiative, the Academic Center for Enrichment (ACE), referring at-risk and under prepared students for added tutoring, and mentoring. The Academic Intervention Specialist monitored those ACE members who were liable in one or more areas of the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA), and provided support through workshops, tutoring and mentoring.

• In addition to the Title V collaborations, last year the Computer Science Program received a grant that provided computer science peer tutors for computer science majors. The Tutoring and Learning Center agreed to provide training and accommodations for five computer science peer tutors, but were made available to students that needed assistance with any entry level computer science course. Once again, this collaboration exhibits TLC’s commitment to its students.

A.7
All data collected, whether quantitative or qualitative, helps to demonstrate that TLC is effective in its goal of assisting students with fulfillment of their academic goals. The number of student visits, coupled with the number of tutoring sessions; are strong indications that the services at TLC are being utilized. With the constant evaluation of our work, the TLC and its programs will continue to stand by its reputation of university compliance and “Closing the Gaps” initiative.
The President’s Report of 2002-2004 declared the Tutoring and Learning Center “A runaway success.” The Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE), a renowned Hispanic organization dedicated to the success of Hispanic students in Higher Education, is quoted in the President’s Report:

TACHE measured Hispanic student enrollment, retention and graduation, as well as Hispanic faculty promotion and hiring of Hispanic staff. A&M Corpus Christi was one of only five public universities in Texas to receive an A in all three categories.

TLC has been instrumental in the University’s earning this recognition, and has been a positive force on campus and will continue to provide much needed services to all its students.

B. Assessment of whether the feature appears to make a significant difference in retention and graduation outcomes for Latin/Hispanic students. Has the feature become more or less effective over time?

The Tutoring and Learning Center at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi serves the University student population in many ways:

- Our primary commitment is assisting at-risk and under-prepared students with the TLC’s peer tutoring program. Special attention is given to Hispanic students that are identified as being at-risk.

- TLC also coordinates and implements the University’s Developmental Education Program. The TLC’s Academic Student Achievement Plan (ASAP) provides individualized guidance and assistance to students to ensure that any student identified as needing developmental course work is placed in the appropriate classes and is assigned to tutoring sessions that coincide with whatever developmental course is in question. The TLC collaborates with the Academic Advising Office to maximize a “team” approach to advising students. For example, students requiring developmental education are advised and enrolled in basic academic skill courses. The Academic Intervention Specialists and the Retention Specialist are responsible for identifying Hispanic students that may need special assistance and working with at-risk students.

- The Tutoring and Learning Center has a unique collaboration with the Department of English and the First-Year Learning Communities Program to operate the University’s Writing Center. The TLC is assigned a “Faculty Partner in Writing” who is reassigned (for one course per semester, or one quarter time) to the Writing Center to provide expertise in writing center theory, to professionalize the practices of the writing consultants, to represent the center in state and national professional organizations, to assist faculty with using writing effectively in their teaching, to promote the writing center with
our campus community, and to work directly with developmental and non-developmental students on their writing. The Writing Center makes its services as accessible as possible; it also provides online assistance to writers and online registration for in-class visits and workshops (available upon faculty request). The Writing Center’s consultants assist writers from across campus with their writing assignments with the vision of helping writers to become more independent and self-directed learners and writers. We continue to improve our goal of staying as consistent as possible to the tutoring recommendations from the College Reading and Learning Association and the International Writing Centers Association.

- The Supplemental Instruction Program (SI) is another unique component of the TLC, designed to increase student performance and retention. This program targets large entry-level, high risk courses and provides students with regularly scheduled, out-of-class peer facilitated group study sessions. An example of such a course is a first-year Environmental Science class which can have up to 100 plus students. Like all other tutors, all Supplemental Instruction Leaders participate in the CRLA tutor training.

The Tutoring and Learning Center conducts formative research-based evaluations at regular intervals throughout the academic year to help improve, validate, generate support, and lastly, demonstrate accountability for the program. Dr. Hunter Boylan, the Director of the National Association of Developmental Education states that summative research-based data should be collected to indicate student progress.

The Retention Office is responsible for identifying the most at-risk first year students and this is done by utilizing the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory. The Retention Office implemented the mandatory completion of this instrument by all first-time incoming students during summer orientation 2006. In the fall 2006 roughly 1,300 first time incoming students completed the College Student Inventory. Roughly 500 of these students are identified as Hispanic. These results from this instrument provide insight to faculty and staff on the student’s demographics, such as their generation status, family income. The CSI was used on campus previously but was only offered to incoming students in an email. Many Hispanic students do not have home access to a computer or the internet and are less likely to complete forms or questionnaires online. Requiring all students to complete the instrument during summer orientation raised the completion rates nearly 70% for Hispanic students. Currently there is not enough data at this time to make a clear conclusion on the effectiveness of the CSI at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. Noel-Levitz and other independent resources, provide information that demonstrates the usefulness of this survey and its success in increasing retention amongst Hispanic students. Using the CSI data will create a support environment for Hispanic students in their first years of college and provide them with the necessary guidance to become successful upperclassmen and TAMUCC graduates.

The Retention Specialist works with two populations, AA’ and AV’s. Out of these two populations, Hispanic students are given extra attention due to their added ‘at-risk’ status.
AA students are in the first half of their high school class but did not achieve a sufficient SAT/ACT score to grant admission. These students are usually active in extracurricular activities. AV Students are in the bottom half of their high school class and also did not achieve a sufficient test score to receive admission to the University. 200 AV students were required to meet with the Retention Specialist and complete an ASAP contract, out of this group roughly half participated in the program. Utilizing their CSI scores recommendations were made for these students regarding tutoring, social activities or counseling. The students meet with the Retention Specialist five times during the course of the semester. The meetings are usually scheduled around important class assignments such as exams or papers.

During the mid semester the Retention Office requests that professors of the AV students submit grade and attendance information. These results are discussed with the students and used to implement mandatory tutoring sessions or to provide information regarding withdrawal from classes. 400 of these evaluations were sent out and 147 were returned. Utilizing this method seven out of the one hundred students did not return of the spring semester. Three of these seven students identified themselves as Hispanic. Both AA and AV students should be required to participate in the ASAP contract. These students will have a hold placed on their records if they fail to meet with the retention specialist or comply with the ASAP agreement. The majority of Hispanic students who attend TAMUCC come from first generation households. Often these students enter our University with little understanding of the expectations that professors and staff hold for them. The ASAP reinforces these skills and helps guide all students who have never experienced interaction with higher education. The ASAP will increase graduation rates amongst Hispanic students who will in turn use the skill the leaned in the program to guide and support upcoming Hispanic students.

The Academic Intervention Specialists work in a collaborative effort with the Transition Center and Retention Specialist to reach out to probationary students in an effort to increase retention and the number of students that successfully complete their education and graduate. Hispanics represent the largest group (56%) of students the Developmental Education Program serves.

In fall 2005, Latino/Hispanic students represented 200 out of 364 enrolled students. This is 56% of 12th class day total of 364 students. 188 Hispanic students remained enrolled for the Fall 2005 semester. This indicates a 94% rate of semester retention for Hispanics. When broken down by the 3 different areas of Read, Math and Writing, Hispanics occupied 75 seats in Reading, 169 seats in Math 0398/0399 and 40 seats in Writing. At the end of the Fall 2005 semester, 45.3% Hispanic students had completed their developmental education in Reading, 32.5% completed Math 0398/0399, and 42.5% completed Writing.

In spring 2006, Latino/Hispanic students represented 111 out of 191 enrolled students. This is 58% of 12th class day total of 191 students. 105 Hispanic students remained enrolled for the Spring 2006 semester. This indicates a 95% rate of semester retention for Hispanics. When broken down by the 3 different areas of Read, Math and Writing,
Hispanics occupied 27 seats in Reading, 100 seats in Math 0398/0399 and 12 seats in Writing. At the end of the Spring 2006 semester, 18.5% Hispanic students completed their developmental education in Reading, 32% completed Math 0398/0399, and 25% completed Writing.

The Latino/Hispanic completion rate for Fall 2006 showed a steady increase from previous semesters. For Fall 2005 37.3% of Hispanics completed their developmental education program, and 42.9% of Hispanics completed their program in Fall 2006. This represents a 5.6% increase in Hispanics developmental completion when comparing Hispanics to Non-Hispanics.

TLC measured how many of the Hispanic students who used ours services received a C or better in the course(s) in which they were receiving tutoring. We compared all Hispanic students who received tutoring and those who did not, but were in the same course. Over a 3 year period, 80.21% of students that received assistance from the center made a C or better. When this percentage of C or better students is broken down by ethnicity, 77% are Hispanic. Measuring beyond grades that the students made in their individual courses, TLC also measured how the students performed overall by looking at grade point averages (GPA). The GPA for the Latino/Hispanic population from Fall 2005, showed a significant increase from Fall 2005 to Fall 2006. Hispanics showed an increase of 4.6% as compared to the Non-Hispanic population of a 2.2% increase. The increase of Hispanics GPA doubled as compared to the Non-Hispanic GPA increase. These figures are for students in developmental education courses.

TLC also measured the retention rates of students by tracking whether students were retained or graduated from the University. The figures showed that the average retention/graduation rate for Hispanic students receiving assistance from TLC is 88%.

All of the data collected, whether quantitative or qualitative, helps to demonstrate that the Tutoring and Learning Center is effective in its goal of assisting Hispanic students with fulfillment of their academic goals. The number of student visits, coupled with the number of tutoring sessions; are strong indications that the services at TLC are being utilized. With the constant evaluation of our work, the Tutoring and Learning Center and its programs will continue to stand by its reputation of university compliance and “Closing the Gaps” initiative.