

Family Involvement for Latino Success in College Executive Summary

“Family Involvement for Latino Success in College” is a quasi-experimental three-year research project conducted by the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) and funded by the United States Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE). The project, one of the first of its kind in higher education, is a response to barriers Latino students face in completing college courses and continuing to enroll until completion of a certificate or degree. Its purpose is to determine whether key family member involvement in academic course work affects the persistence, success, and retention of Latino students in higher education. The project will also determine whether key family member involvement in academic course work affects the persistence, success, and retention of other demographically diverse students in the DCCCD.

The “Family Involvement for Latino Success in College” project emerged from a rigorous competitive process as one of only five community college project proposals funded nationwide by the Comprehensive Program of the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education in the U. S. Department of Education in 2006. One of the largest grants awarded by FIPSE that year, the project proposal, supported by five college presidents, involved more than three years of planning by staff and faculty of five of the DCCCD colleges.

This ongoing District-wide project meets or exceeds each of the criteria for designation as a “Best Practice” in the DCCCD identified in the March 10, 2009, memorandum outlining “Practices Classifications and Definitions” (PC&D). References to data or information supporting each of these practices or definitions are identified in the Index below and in the referenced data and supporting documents (See the attached “Index to ‘Practices Classifications and Definitions’ Criteria Addressed in This Report.”)

Need

This project is data-driven from multiple perspectives. First, the proposal for pursuing a grant-funded research project stemmed from compelling research regarding the underserved academic potential of Latino students in the DCCCD service area. Second, the purpose of the research project is to gather and disseminate data regarding whether or not participation by key family members in a Latino student’s course work influences that student’s success, retention in courses, and persistence toward the completion of a college degree. Third, the project generates, collects, and distributes data from the participating faculty, their course development or revisions, and their involvement with those students who engage key family members in their learning activities (PC&D – *Provide proof of being data driven*).

The original proposal to FIPSE for “The Family Involvement for Latino Success in College” research project was driven by data gathered from the research by social scientists in the field of higher education. In 2003 the Pew Hispanic Center and the Civil Rights Project at Harvard recognized studies and their findings on barriers Latinos face in succeeding in college, conducted by Garcia, Gonzalez, Alexander, O’Daniel, and Grimes. These findings were based on data collected in Dallas County by social

scientists at the University of Texas at Dallas and instructors in the DCCCD. Eight specific barriers discernible in the data collected for this study are the foundation for the project. (PC&D – *Provide proof of being data driven*).

Less than 10% of Texas' Latino population hold college degrees ("State of Transition," 2005). In the Dallas County Community College District, less than 9% complete undergraduate degrees (Garcia, et al., 2003). In a community college district with three of its seven campuses designated federally as "Hispanic Serving Institutions" (HSI), staff and faculty organized a focus group in 2003 to explore options for addressing the gap in Latino student success. Some of the barriers Latino students face that keep them from entering and succeeding in college involve the family. Based on the research, the group proposed a project to measure the extent, if any, key family member involvement affects individual Latino students' persistence, success, and retention in college courses (PC&D – *Provide proof of being data driven*).

Family Involvement Model (FIM) course development often differs from a "traditional" process where course development generally occurs in isolation. Teaming of faculty supports and encourages collaboration and faculty development, such as learning communities, with the FIM as a linking element between courses. This approach leverages implementation of the FIM across a broad array of cross-disciplinary curricula (PC&D – *Intentionally promote relationships (including partnerships with external and/or internal groups, Encourage faculty and/or staff development.)*)

Research Design

A quasi-experimental research design is being used to evaluate Latino student persistence, success, and retention in the colleges participating in the project. While there are a number of uncontrolled variables that influence students' academic progress, the control factor in this project is key family member involvement within their college courses. Research data is generated by tracking cohorts of students enrolled in college-level academic courses that include the Family Involvement Model (FIM) in course work (PC&D – *Provide proof of being data driven, Set high standards and expectations*).

Definitions

For this project, "persistence" refers to a student's remaining in a course; "success" is the student's completion of the course with a grade of "C" or better; "retention" refers to a student's enrollment in the next long term. Although the DCCCD and its constituent colleges traditionally measure course completion as a student who has completed a course with any performance grade, the project determined from the outset to set a high standard of success for itself and all participating students, their families and faculty members (PC&D – *Set high standards and expectations, Demonstrate a high level of excellence or achievement*).

Data

Initial data indicates a positive measurable effect of FIM implementation in each of the three areas: Persistence, Success, and Retention. To date, data from the first three cohorts have been analyzed. Descriptive statistics for the first cohort (Spring 2007) indicate that the students participating in FIM courses achieved Success (performance grade of "C" or better) at 76.3% while students in the general population succeeded at 64.6%. The same cohort reflects a level of Persistence at 83.1% as compared to the general population at 81.9% (PC&D – *Provide proof of being data driven; Are "proven," usually over two full years*). From long semester to long semester, the Retention rate for the first cohort (Spring 2007) is reflected in the following table:

Retention Rate – Spring 2007 Cohort

| | Spring 2007 - Fall 2007 | Spring 2007 - Spring 2008 | Spring 2007 - Fall 2008 |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| FIM Students ¹ | 71.2% | 67.8% | 62.7% |
| Non FIM Students ² | 56.6% | 50.0% | 42.6% |

¹Students in FIM classes

²Mountain View College and Brookhaven College non-FIM students

Descriptive statistics for the second cohort (Fall 2007) indicate similar results. Students participating in FIM courses achieved Success (performance grade of "C" or better) at 79.4% while students in the general population succeeded at 66.7%. The same cohort reflects a level of Persistence at 83.8% as compared to the general population at 81.8% (PC&D – *Provide proof of being data driven; Are "proven," usually over two full years*). From long semester to long semester, the Retention rate for the second cohort (Fall 2007) is reflected in the following table:

Retention Rate – Fall 2007 Cohort

| | Fall 2007 - Spring 2008 | Fall 2007 - Fall 2008 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| FIM Students ¹ | 83.8% | 75.0% |
| Non FIM Students ² | 65.8% | 50.5% |

¹Students in FIM classes

²Mountain View, Brookhaven, and Richland Colleges non-FIM students

Descriptive statistics for the third cohort (Spring 2008) continue the trend seen in the previous data. Students participating in FIM courses achieved Success (performance grade of "C" or better) at 81.7% while students in the general population succeeded at 66.9%. The same cohort reflects a level of Persistence at 90.4% as compared to the general population at 83.6% (PC&D – *Provide proof of being data driven; Are "proven," usually over two full years*). From long semester to long semester, the Retention rate for the third cohort (Spring 2008) is reflected in the following table:

Retention Rate – Spring 2008 Cohort

| | Spring 2008 - Fall 2008 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| FIM Students ¹ | 69.9% |
| Non FIM Students ² | 57.3% |

¹Students in FIM classes

²Mountain View, Brookhaven, and Richland Colleges non-FIM students

Descriptive statistics for the fourth cohort (Fall 2008) continue the trend seen in the previous Retention data. (PC&D – *Provide proof of being data driven; Are “proven,” usually over two full years*). From long semester to long semester, the Retention rate for the fourth cohort (Spring 2008) is reflected in the following table:

Retention Rate – Fall 2008 Cohort

| | Fall 2008 - Spring 2009 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| FIM Students ¹ | 69.5% |
| Non FIM Students ² | 76.6% |

¹Students in FIM classes

²Mountain View, Brookhaven, Cedar Valley and Richland Colleges non-FIM students

Preliminary Results and their Dissemination

Initial results indicate a positive relationship between engaging students’ family members in coursework and the students’ subsequent success and retention in college. There is an educationally significant impact of family member involvement on student persistence. It is important to note that while the project began with only two sections of college courses, at present, the FIM courses involved have expanded throughout the DCCCD. This expansion is an indication of successfully planned project dissemination. In 2008, the DCCCD Office of Educational Affairs identified the project as a “DCCCD Best Practice.”

Taking the results beyond the DCCCD, however, project dissemination activities currently in progress include an internationally distributed faculty development video, additional presentations at national and international conferences, publications, and exploring FIM implementation agreements with other community colleges.