

Index to “Practices Classifications and Definitions” Criteria

According to the March 10, 2009, memorandum containing the “Practices Classifications and Definitions” (PC&D), for a Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) project to be recognized as a “Best Practice,” it must meet the following criteria:

- Reflect at least three of the five CCSSE benchmarks, (with priority given to the first three categories): active and collaborative learning; student-faculty interaction, support for learners, student effort, and academic challenge
- Are solutions-oriented and/or reflect risk taking
- Intentionally promote relationships (including partnerships with external and/or internal groups)
- Are student-centered
- Encourage faculty and/or staff development
- Set high standards and expectations
- Demonstrate overall program success
- Are “proven,” usually over two full years
- Demonstrate a high level of excellence or achievement
- Provide proof of being data-driven

Each section of the Index that follows points to evidence of one or more of the “Practices Classifications and Definitions” above defining a DCCCD “Best Practice.”

- **Reflect at least three of the five CCSSE benchmarks. The “Family Involvement for Latino Success in College” project addresses each of the five CCSSE benchmarks.**

CCSSE Benchmark – Active and Collaborative Learning

A “Student-Family Member Contract” is required in each course section that participates in the “Family Involvement for Latino Success in College” (FILSC) project. To date, forty-five (45) sections of courses that range across the curriculum taught by both full-time and adjunct instructors contain this component. CCSSE items 4i and 4r are directly addressed by the FILSC project:

- 1) Students “participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course,” and
- 2) Students “discussed ideas from [their] readings or classes with others outside of class (students, *family members*, co-workers, etc.).”

Key family members serve as informants to the students in the development of essays, reports, and other learning activities in each of the 45 courses represented to date in the project.

See the attached “Combined Syllabi for Best Practices” section for more than twenty (20) representative examples of these syllabi. Beyond the syllabi, see the “Family

Involvement Model Chart”, attached, and Student-Family contracts online at the project website: <http://www.mvc.dcccd.edu/fimhome/default.aspx>

CCSSE Benchmark – Student-Faculty Interaction

Representative syllabi, attached, reflect required student-faculty member interactions particularly for CCSSE items 4k – “Used email to communicate with an instructor,” and 4l – “Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor.”

For CCSSE item 4n, see sample syllabi. In some of these courses, students participate in off-campus orientations, field trips, site visits, and community-based activities that include the faculty members along with key family members.

See, for examples, the MVC “Fiesta Oak Cliff” CUST 2370 class (Fall 2007); the MVC Early High School Spanish Class (Spring 2008, 2009); the MVC Art Appreciation course (Fall 2008, Spring 2009); the BHC Human Anatomy & Physiology SCIT 1407 course (Spring 2009); the BHC CUST 2370 – “The Caribbean” course (Spring 2008, Fall 2008, Spring 2009); the RC Arts 1301 “Arts Appreciation” course (Fall 2008); the RC Bilingual Education course (Summer 2008); the CVC Speech 1311 course (Fall 2008); and the EFC Developmental Math 0098 course (Spring 2009).

CCSSE Benchmark – Support for Learners

Syllabi included with this report reflect the broad range of resources that FILSC courses provide for students. By its very nature, the “Student-Family Member Contract” incorporated formally into the course requirements and the data available from student-family member interaction already indicate that the family-member support is a critical element anticipating CCSSE item 9b – “Providing the support you need to help you succeed in this college.”

The Cultural Studies Courses that have incorporated the “Student-Family Member Contract” particularly “encourage contact among students from different economic, social and racial or ethnic backgrounds” (CCSSE item 9c). See representative syllabi attached to this report and the “FIM Chart” in the “Data” section.

CCSSE Benchmark – Student Effort

Student effort for this research project is demonstrated in two ways:

- 1) Evidence of participation in the “Student-Family Member Contract” in transfer courses, and
- 2) Data derived relative to those students participating in the FILSC.

CCSSE 4d addresses work on a “project integrating ideas or information from various sources.” In addition to traditional research for projects identified in the syllabi for each of the 45 sections, students must engage one or more key family members as formal informants in the collection of information supporting their projects.

The data gathered to date indicate a significant and measurable positive increase in success, persistence, and retention for those students who participate in the FILSC

against those students in the general population across the six college campuses engaged in the project.

See the “FIM Graphs” in the “Data” section for Spring 2007, Fall 2007, and Spring 2008 data already compiled.

CCSSE Benchmark – Academic Challenge

The FILSC project provides evidence of CCSSE items 5b – Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory; 5c – Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways; 5d – Making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods; 5e – Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations; 5f – Using information you have read or heard to perform a new skill.

See the bullet points included in the “FIM Chart” for their content descriptors in individual course sections.

- **Are solutions-oriented and/or reflect risk taking**

The “Family Involvement for Latino Success in College” research project is both “solutions-oriented” and “reflect[s] risk taking.”

The Issue. The Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) Comprehensive Grants Program recognizes only those proposals that address key issues and their solutions in higher education. Dr. Steven Murdock, Texas State Demographer, in his 2005 report “State of Transition”, notes that the single most important factor that can check the anticipated and severe decline in the overall quality of life in Texas between 2005 and 2040 is the higher education of the Texas population, a community that will increase 300% during that period and will reflect a predominantly uneducated citizenry. The ethnic population in Texas that will contribute most significantly to this decline is the rising Latino population of first-generation immigrants.

A Solutions-oriented Initiative. First, “Family Involvement for Latino Success in College,” is specifically and directly “solutions-oriented” in that it seeks to determine whether key family member involvement in academic course work affects persistence, success, and retention of Latino students in higher education. As a “Best Practice,” key family member involvement has been shown to have a positive effect on the retention of not only Latino students, but of all other students—African American, first-time in college, and other traditionally underserved student demographics—enrolled in courses that incorporate the Family Involvement Model for instruction.

A Risk-Taking Initiative. Second, the FILSC research project “reflects risk taking”. The “Student-Family Member Contract,” a key component in the “Family Involvement Model,” is a novel approach to instruction in higher education. While many studies exist correlating family member involvement in K-12 education, this is one of the first national research projects to explore the possible effect of family member involvement in the success of college students. So novel is the approach that in spring 2007 the *Chronicle of Higher Education* profiled the project in a national article, “It’s a Family Affair” *CHE*, April 20, 2007.

- **Intentionally promote relationships (including partnerships with external and/or internal groups)**

Project Context. From its inception, what has become the “Family Involvement for Latino Success in College” research project, included partnerships across the DCCCD, with researchers, staff, and faculty of The University of Texas at Dallas School of Social Sciences, and area community organizations like the Oak Cliff Center for Community Studies in the MVC service area. Throughout the entire three-year planning process, discussions were open to representatives from each campus, and at one time or another, representatives of each campus provided input. With the sole exception of North Lake College, planning meetings were held at each college as well as the Bill J. Priest Center. Personnel from the Office of District Planning and Resource Development assisted in the preparation of the final drafts of the FIPSE application. Five college presidents signed off on the proposal, and in 2006 Mountain View College agreed to serve as the fiscal agent of the project.

Institutional Partnerships and Relationships. In the course of the three-year project cycle, a wide network of institutional relationships including the League for Innovation in Community Colleges, the North Texas Consortium of Community Colleges, the Meadows Museum of Art, Tarrant County College, *STARLINK*, the Hispanic Women’s Network of Texas, the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education, the Organization of American Historians, the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, the National Institute of Staff and Organizational Development, and the National Community College Hispanic Council have been fostered.

District Intra-Campus Relationships. Across the DCCCD, the FIM project has brought together many professional educators and administrators from six of the campuses, each committed to addressing the issue of Latino and other underserved students’ retention. This project has established and nurtured collegial relationships between faculty members, administrators and student support staff at each campus, as well as other District groups. Examples include relationships between student groups such as the Black Students Organization at MVC, LULAC, and the MVC and RLC Art Clubs, and cross-departmental groups like Los Patos Listos at RLC.

Student-Family Member Relationships. Most important, however, have been the relationships generated and rekindled by the students themselves who often have engaged key family members with whom they had previously enjoyed only minimal contact. Student-Family Member Contracts have authenticated these contacts and activities as legitimate learning activities and have allowed family members who might not otherwise have ever entered a college campus to experience their student family members participation in a college course.

- **Are student-centered**

Student-centered by Definition. The sole focus of the “Family Member Involvement for Latino Success in College” has been the college student—his/her success, retention, and persistence toward the completion of a college degree. The purpose of the project—to determine whether or not key family member involvement in academic course work affects that success—is the definitive example of “student-centered” focus. The on-going dissemination of the findings of the project are aimed exclusively

at assisting other colleges and universities in planning courses and learning strategies that will improve student retention for their own populations.

- **Encourage faculty and/or staff development**

Funding for Staff Development. Built into the FIPSE grant are funds that have been and are being used by faculty to develop courseware that involve the FIM for existing courses as well as for completely new courses. These include both traditional lecture classes and some taught as distance learning courses. Each uses the “Student-Family Member Contract”. To date, twenty-eight faculty members have either modified existing courses or developed entirely new courses that incorporate the Family Involvement Model into their key learning activities. See the “Family Involvement Model Chart”.

Additionally, the project has supported faculty professional development at conferences, workshops, and in their preparations for publications. Each semester participating faculty members have attended District-wide meetings organized by the project to share their experiences and those of their students. They have contributed to the development of two video productions including an internationally broadcast webinar featured by *STARLINK*. Key campus administrators have attended presentations by the FILSC director and faculty members. Finally, faculty and staff, along with the project director, have reported findings and initial results to the FIPSE Project Directors Conference in Washington, D.C. They met with other nationally-funded FIPSE project coordinators and educators from around the country to exchange ideas about best practices currently implemented in both community college and university settings nationwide.

- **Set high standards and expectations**

Toward a Higher Vision. The core of this research project is to help students to raise their own expectations and those of their families, by engaging them in rigorous academic course content.

The Question of Standards. Preliminary project data indicate that personalizing a learning activity, by its very nature, positively affects the level of learning and the learning outcomes of a course. Project data, generated by students in a broad spectrum of academic courses employing the Family Involvement Model (FIM), indicate that students enrolled in high content-oriented classes have been more successful than students in the general college population. It is expected that the FIM would be equally as successful in orientation and human development courses.

- **Demonstrate overall program success**

Program Benchmarks. The FILSC project measures success qualitatively and quantitatively. Student essays posted on the project website, videotaped student interviews and family member feedback from evaluation forms chronicle the positive impact of family involvement. Standing-room only presentations at national academic conferences, requests for publication in academic journals and interest in replication from colleges and universities outside the DCCCD qualitatively reflect overall program success.

Quantitative measures of overall program success based on Colleague data are summarized in the following documents, attached:

- 1) FIPSE Analysis SP07-FA08
- 2) FIM Graphs
- 3) Executive Summary

- **Are “proven,” usually over two full years**

The Data. The project data, extending over a two-year period are summarized in the following documents, attached:

- 1) FIPSE Analysis SP07-FA08
- 2) FIM Graphs
- 3) Executive Summary

- **Demonstrate a high level of excellence or achievement**

A Higher Standard of Measure. The project demonstrates a high level of excellence by definition. Traditionally, DCCCD and its constituent colleges measure course completion as a student who finishes a course, regardless of the performance grade awarded. FILSC sets a higher standard for the measure of “success” by defining course completion as students who are awarded a grade of “C” or better.

- **Provide proof of being data-driven**

Three Measures of Data Analysis. The project is data-driven along three specific dimensions. First, the proposal for this project stemmed from compelling research regarding potential Latino students nationally, as well as in the DCCCD service area. Less than 10% of Texas’ Latino population holds college degrees (“State of Transition,” 2005). In the Dallas County Community College District, less than 9% complete undergraduate degrees (Garcia, et al., 2003).

The research proposal to FIPSE for “The Family Involvement for Latino Success in College” research project was driven by data gathered from the literature 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 succeeding in college, conducted by Garcia, Gonzalez, Alexander, O’Daniel, and Grimes. Barriers identified in the data collected for that study were fundamental to the FILSC project. Together, these barriers point to the critical role that key family members play in determining the probable success or failure of a Latino student entering higher education.

Second, the purpose of the research project is to gather and disseminate data regarding whether participation by key family members in a Latino student’s course work influences that student’s overall college 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.

