UNIFORM RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIC PLAN

Report on 2003 Submissions

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Division of Participation and Success

July 2004

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

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Mission of the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's mission is to work with the Legislature, Governor, governing boards, higher education institutions and other entities to provide the people of Texas the widest access to higher education of the highest quality in the most efficient manner.

Philosophy of the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will promote access to quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access is unacceptable. The Board will be open, ethical, responsive, and committed to public service. The Board will approach its work with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the people of Texas and is committed to the best use of public monies. The Coordinating Board will engage in actions that add value to Texas and to higher education; the agency will avoid efforts that do not add value or that are duplicated by other entities.

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Executive Summary

House Bill 1678, [TEC 61.086] was passed by the 76th Texas Legislature. It directed the Coordinating Board to "develop and annually update a uniform recruitment and retention strategy to identify, attract, enroll and retain students that reflect the population of this state." The bill further directs higher education institutions to "implement the uniform strategy and report annually to the Coordinating Board the manner in which the institution has implemented the Uniform strategy."

The Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy is included in the *Closing the Gaps by 2015* plan and is important to the state's future success in educating larger proportions of all of its citizens. For that reason, it is important for each institution to link its recruitment and retention strategies to its targets for *Closing the Gaps*. Information on *Closing the Gaps* can be found at http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/AdvisoryCommittees/HEP/0096.htm.

The uniform strategy was designed and recommended by a representative, statewide advisory committee of Texas higher education professionals who assisted the Coordinating Board in meeting its legislative mandate. It is prescriptive by design so that all higher education institutions, regardless of local resources, have equal access to effective strategic enrollment management practices. Many institutions have practiced good strategic enrollment management using a campus-wide, comprehensive approach to solving problems in recruitment, enrollment, and retention services. This mandate simply assures that all institutions do so.

Coordinating Board staff brought in strategic enrollment management experts to assist institutions in the development of their plans in September 2000, June 2001, and June 2002. In addition, staff conducted regional meetings in Denton, San Antonio, Houston, Mt. Pleasant, and San Angelo during August and September 2002. Information was provided on the state's *Closing the Gaps* plan, with special attention given to the Hispanic targets, schools with success in recruiting Hispanics, and promising practices in Hispanic student recruitment. In 2003, staff conducted additional regional meetings in Corpus Christi, Carthage, San Antonio, and Houston. In addition, the information was presented as part of the conferences of the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education and the Texas Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers. Representatives from a majority of the state's higher education institutions attended these meetings and were encouraged to form partnerships and collaborate on programs and ideas to recruit and retain students. Participants were asked to ensure that their strategic plans require strong collaborations among academic affairs, student affairs, and other institutional offices that serve students directly. Information was provided on the state's *Closing the Gaps* plan, with special attention to the *College for Texans* Campaign activities as possible strategic plan elements.

The strategy is "uniform" in the structure of the process for developing and reporting strategic enrollment plans. However there is no requirement that every institution have "uniform" solutions to what are certain to be local and individual issues. In fact, one of the strengths of Texas higher education is the diversity of educational offerings and campus climates. One of the strengths of the reporting function is that it allows the Coordinating Board to collect and then disseminate new and creative ideas that all

institutions can consider for local implementation. This report also addresses reporting requirements for HB 400 and the *College for Texans* Campaign.

The Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy Advisory Committee continues to assist the Coordinating Board with this legislative mandate. The committee worked with Coordinating Board staff to create an online reporting format that will be available for the 2004 reporting period. It is the committee's hope, and the hope of the Coordinating Board staff, that this online reporting process is less onerous for institutions than paper reporting.

The Coordinating Board staff stands ready to help institutions meet the obligations under the law and to help each institution serve its student population effectively.

The report consists of a signature page with two electronic signatures [(1) administrator in charge, (2) president's approval], plus the strategic enrollment management plan report. The strategic enrollment management plan update reporting includes the following sections:

Section 1 Update On Steering Committee Activities

Section 2 Update and Progress toward Goals

Section 3 Data Collection

Section 4 List all *College for Texans* Campaign Activities

Section 5 Initiatives to Improve Participation and Success Of Underrepresented Populations and/or First-Generation Low-Income Students

Section 6 Describe the Top Three Successful Success/Retention Activities

Institutions submitted their Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy strategic enrollment plan updates on December 1, 2003. Updates to the plans in a new online format will be submitted on December 1, 2004.

Best Practices Identified

Some of the institutional plans included the following strategies that should be replicated as best practices:

- Institutional financial commitment to enrollment management plan
- Trained and talented professional and support staff
- Support services to students
- Pre-college programs
- Community and business involvement

- Articulation agreements

Key Findings

After reviewing plans submitted by institutions, the Coordinating Board staff determined that:

- Strategies for recruitment and retention of first-generation and at-risk students should be expanded to serve more students.

- Institutions should begin promoting higher education to elementary and middle school students by partnering with elementary and middle schools as well as community-based organizations.

- Institutions have formed partnerships with some Texas high schools, but additional partnerships are needed.

- The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board should provide additional support via outreach, data, and training to Texas public colleges and universities through its *College for Texans* Campaign, annual conference, regional meetings, Coordinating Board meetings, and website to support strategic enrollment management efforts.

Recommendations

The Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy helps identify, attract, enroll and retain students who reflect the population of Texas. The strategy is a *Closing the Gaps* strategy for meeting the plan's success goal. **It is critical that each institution continue to align its recruitment and retention strategy with the targets it sets for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps*.**

The Coordinating Board staff is providing the following recommendations to assist institutions with the targets for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps*. In addition, the successful recruitment and retention strategies will be compiled for dissemination to the institutions on the Coordinating Board website and at the annual Recruitment and Retention Conference. The staff will continue to make presentations at regional meetings to facilitate the sharing of best practices among institutions. The staff continues to encourage partnerships and cross-institutional visits between recruitment and retention contacts at each institution.

All Texas public colleges and universities should:

- Continue to align the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategic plan with the targets it sets for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps.*

- Continue to partner with the *College for Texans* Campaign to spread the message about the value of a college education, the financial aid that is available, and the academic and financial preparation that is necessary for success.

- Form partnerships with high schools in their area and include college enrollment workshops as part of a service that they offer to the students. These partnerships should include collaboration with high school counselors and teachers.

- Form partnerships and collaborations with the business community to provide grants and scholarships to students in financial need.

- Create incentives and requirements for seamless student transitions among high schools, community and technical colleges, universities, and health-related institutions.

- Identify additional resources that may be needed—beyond state resources—from federal sources, private and charitable foundations, and corporate and individual donors, to sustain progress toward recruiting and retaining a student population that reflects the population of Texas and to close gaps in participation and success.

- Strengthen intervention strategies where the institution takes the initiative. These strategies, known as "intrusive intervention," involve advising or counseling for students as a model for retention and success.

- Continue to include faculty in recruitment and retention efforts.

- Provide role models and mentors for students, faculty, and administrators.

- Strengthen recruitment of minority students and involve minority alumni for recruitment and retention efforts.

- Form relationships with minority community leaders to enhance their recruitment and retention efforts.

- Bring in minority speakers, especially at events exclusively for minority students and their parents.

- Strengthen campus-wide information systems to tie different systems and data together in a seamless information system.

The Texas Legislature should consider funding a Texas recruitment and retention success program modeled after the successful U.S. Department of Education TRIO programs to assist colleges and universities in their recruitment and retention efforts.

Legislative Background

House Bill 1678, [TEC 61.086] was passed by the 76th Texas Legislature and directed the Coordinating Board to "develop and annually update a uniform recruitment and retention strategy to identify, attract, enroll and retain students that reflect the population of this state." The bill further directs higher education institutions to "implement the uniform strategy and report annually to the Coordinating Board the manner in which the institution has implemented the Uniform strategy." The uniform strategy was developed with the assistance of an advisory committee and was approved by the Coordinating Board in April 2000.

Advisory Committee on Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy

An additional statewide Advisory Committee on Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy was appointed on July 28, 2003 to provide guidance on an online reporting format for the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy. The charges to the committee were as follows:

- **Propose the best way to ensure that *Closing the Gaps* and the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy are aligned and integrated.**

- **Propose procedures and criteria for institutions to use in implementing online reporting of the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy**.

- **Propose the best ways for the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy to help close the gaps in participation and success across the state.**

The first three charges mentioned above were satisfied by updating the Uniform Recruitment and Retention report form to pinpoint the precise information that the Coordinating Board staff needs to satisfy reporting requirements, as well as to share promising practices between institutions. It was decided that an online reporting system would be the most efficient way to report and share the information reported by institutions. This would also make the information accessible to everyone interested in Texas higher education institutions.

- **Propose criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategic Plan strategies.**

The advisory committee decided that there are already evaluation tools in place to measure the effectiveness of the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategic Plan strategies. As a part of the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy, the chief executive officer of each institution has appointed a steering committee with the charge of evaluating the institution plan on a regular basis and making any necessary adjustments to institution strategies. Each institution has tied its Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy to its *Closing the Gaps* enrollment targets. Each institution is encouraged to update and analyze its strategies and enrollment targets to ensure that the strategies and goals in their Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy are helping them achieve those targets. In addition, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Star Award provided statewide recognition for programs that demonstrated excellence based on two years of data and significant contributions

towards *Closing the Gaps* goals and targets. There are also plans in place for a statewide accountability system which will include an evaluation of institutional programs.

- **Identify additional resources that may be needed—beyond state resources—from federal sources, private and charitable foundations, and corporate and individual donors, to sustain progress toward recruiting and retaining a student population that reflects the face of Texas and to close gaps in participation and success. What can be done if additional financial resources aren't available?**

The advisory committee divided this charge and assigned two subcommittees to it. Subcommittee One began researching the effects of cuts in TEXAS Grants on students. Subcommittee One members decided that further research was needed and recommended that the staff of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board survey the financial aid officers of each of the advisory committee members' institutions to find out the impact of the cuts in TEXAS Grants. Each advisory committee member will notify his or her financial aid officer of this research to ensure that the Coordinating Board staff will receive full cooperation in this effort. Each institution will be asked to provide the following information: 1) The number of students who were eligible and received a TEXAS Grant. 2) The number who were eligible and did not receive a TEXAS Grant, but enrolled anyway. 3) The number of students who were eligible for a TEXAS Grant and did not enroll. If there are significant numbers, then an additional telephone survey of these students should be done to get the students' story on the effects of the cutbacks in TEXAS Grants.

Subcommittee Two began the process of identifying additional resources that may be needed beyond state resources. The process began by identifying grant writers from each of the advisory committee members' institutions. The grant writers have agreed to collaborate with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board staff on identifying additional resources. The Coordinating Board also provides grant writing training at the Annual Recruitment and Retention Conference.

- **Identify any preliminary changes that institutions may be making to their admissions practices as a result of the Supreme Court decisions in the Michigan affirmative action cases** *Gratz v. Bollinger* **(undergraduate admissions) and** *Grutter v. Bollinger* **(law school admissions).**

Each four-year public and health-related institution was surveyed regarding any preliminary changes they may be making to their admissions practices as a result of the Supreme Court decisions mentioned above. The results of that survey were reported to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Government Relations and Public Information office.

Methodology

The Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy Advisory Committee guided Coordinating Board's Division of Participation and Success staff on the format for the online report format. The Coordinating Board staff reviewed the 2003 Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategic Plan updates submitted by Texas public colleges and universities. In these reports, Texas public colleges and universities identified their successful programs noting the best practices of proactive recruitment, outreach, and academic support. The identified programs can be replicated successfully at other institutions in Texas. Institutions also reported on their *College for Texans* Campaign participation and their partnerships with Texas schools.

Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy

The Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy helps identify, attract, enroll and retain students who reflect the population of Texas. The Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy is a *Closing the Gaps* strategy for meeting the plan's success goal.

The uniform strategy is based on the principles of strategic enrollment management and offers a campus-wide, comprehensive approach. It can help institutions improve the quality of the education, programs, policies, and services that affect student recruitment, retention, and graduation. Enrollment management enables institutions to respond more proactively to external factors such as changing demographics and accountability for education outcomes.

Fundamental to the strategy is the concept that better service to their constituency through improved education, programs, policies and services, improves the institution's ability to enroll, retain, and graduate students. The strategy gives institutions a framework for developing plans based on research and incorporating the needs of students, and helps all higher education institutions meet their goals for closing the gaps in participation and success. The strategy recommends specific enrollment management strategies that are designed to improve the institutions' ability to identify, attract, recruit, retain, and graduate students that reflect the population of Texas. **It is critical that each institution continue to align its recruitment and retention strategy with the targets it sets for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps*.**

Elements of a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan

These elements are considered necessary for effective enrollment management plans:

- Appoint a steering committee
- Conduct an internal and external assessment and analysis to develop measurable goals and objectives
- Based on the results of the analysis, develop a marketing plan to attract and recruit a diverse student population

- Develop recruitment and retention strategies that incorporate a data management/tracking system to monitor and communicate with students throughout the process

- Provide adequate funding and resources for the plan

- Incorporate initiatives and actions to improve campus diversity and improve services to underrepresented populations into the plan

Steering Committee

Institutions began the implementation of the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy by appointing a strategic enrollment management steering committee on their campuses. Each committee is charged with policy oversight, evaluation, planning, and advising on strategies, goals, and objectives of the strategic enrollment management program which should align with the targets set by the institution for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps*.

The charge to the steering committee should communicate a commitment for successful development and implementation of the plan, and should be issued by the chief executive officer.

The steering committee is responsible for:

- Policy oversight

- Evaluation

- Assessment

- Planning

- Advising on strategies, goals, and objectives

The committee's work should focus on:

- Research

- Analysis

- Marketing

- Recruitment

- Retention

Institutions were asked if they have campus-wide representation on their strategic enrollment management steering committee and to list the members of the steering committee. Possible committee members include:

- Senior administrators, such as vice presidents of student affairs and academic affairs
- Deans of enrollment services/management
- Admissions counselors and recruiters
- Fiscal staff
- Directors of admission and financial aid
- Deans of retention programs
- Faculty leaders
- Key staff from institutional research, housing, and student life activities
- Other student services staff
- Alumni affairs staff
- Marketing and public relations staff
- Prospective, current, and former students

The Advisory Committee on the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy and Coordinating Board staff agreed that institutions should have campus steering committees actively working on the institution's Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy. These steering committee members would also be helpful for advising the Coordinating Board on any future recruitment and retention initiatives.

Internal and External Assessment and Analysis

Information Systems

Campus-wide information must tie different systems and data together in a seamless information system. Data should be captured at its source made available to other authorized users. Technology should be used to provide services directly to students, faculty, and staff. Linkages among student information, course planning and scheduling, faculty planning and management, and student financial aid activities should be seamless. Data and information should flow barrier-free to authorized users and be in usable form to all who need it. Security issues should not be barriers to systems' integration.

Systems in use by Texas institutions to improve service, reduce the rate of increase in variable costs, reallocate exposure to liability, and increase the enrollment management potential of the institution include:

- Touchtone registration
- Electronic mail
- Voice mail
- Voice information systems
- One-card systems
- Online advising
- In-house publishing on demand
- Executive information systems
- Academic bulletin boards
- Electronic classrooms
- Personalized systems of instruction
- Information kiosks

Evaluation

Institutions were required to establish benchmarks and performance measures to use for each objective and strategy. Some plans showed evidence of some performance measures with both an explanation of the measure and the methodology for its calculation. These performance measures will be used as part of the annual reporting requirements.

Types of evaluations included in the plans:

- Surveys
- Personnel evaluations
- Service system evaluations
- Program evaluations
- Program reviews through self study and analyses of programmatic strengths and weaknesses
- Focus groups on service effectiveness

- Biannual survey of student needs and priorities or faculty needs and priorities

Marketing Plans

The marketing plans describe target markets and review the institution's major publications, programs, scheduled recruitment contacts, and strategies to increase the applicant pool. Some institutions found that a test market provides a way to identify students who fit the profile but may have been previously overlooked. Institutions are working to ensure that their publications have a uniform message are tailored to potential markets. Institutions are also working to ensure that information and deadlines from the admissions, financial aid, housing, orientation, and academic offices do not conflict with each other.

Recruitment Strategy

Institutions report that the recruitment strategies should include interaction via telephone; written communication; web-based communication; face-to-face program opportunities in the local area; interaction with current students, alumni and others, as well as campus visits; and exposure to printed recruitment materials. A data management/student tracking system, which allows campus offices to monitor and communicate with students from initial contact to graduation, is fundamental to the success of the strategy. Some institutions created a student prospect database, which includes information on potential prospects for admission so that they can be sent marketing material, information about events, and applications for admission.

Institutions report that beginning this work at high schools in the counties that are a part of their service area. Some institutions hold Saturday and evening tours and form on-site partnerships with the high schools to increase the number of students who participate and benefit from the college-preparation material. Some institutions are targeting middle school students to begin preparing them for enrolling in higher education. Many outreach ideas listed in the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy identified on the Coordinating Board website at www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/pdf/0231.pdf were used by institutions to create their own outreach programs. Institutions are also recruiting continuing education, former, commuting/working, distance learning, and other non-traditional students.

Retention Strategy

Institutions report that the retention strategy should include policies and programs that enhance and support student success. Examples relate to campus climate, customer-friendly staff, and well-trained faculty knowledgeable in teaching strategies and learning styles. Some institutions are developing programs and initiatives that can improve the success of underrepresented students. Examples include extended student orientation, student success courses, bridge programs, "early alert" systems, access to faculty, access to appropriate role models (teachers, mentors, speakers, and staff) and academic support services (tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing and math labs,

and study skills assessment), and qualitative and effective advisement and counseling systems.

Funding

Most of the plans reported on funding dedicated to their successful recruitment and retention programs. Each institution was asked to search and apply for all funding available for those efforts. Evaluations of the federal TRIO program indicate that the Upward Bound and Student Support Services programs improve the academic preparation of participating students. Each institution provided funding information on each of their *College for Texans* Campaign activities, their first generation student initiatives, and their success/retention activities.

Update and Progress Towards Goals

Institutions were asked to provide a list of their strategic enrollment management goals and the current status of those goals. It is critical that each institution align its Strategic Enrollment Management Plan with the enrollment targets it sets for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps*.

Data Collection

A data management/student tracking system which allows the various campus offices to monitor and communicate with students throughout the process from initial contact to graduation is fundamental to the success of the strategy.

Some examples include:

- Cohort tracking;
- Surveys and questionnaires;
- Focus groups and interviews (personal and telephone)
- Current and historical student and institutional data

Institutions were asked whether they were collecting and using data to improve student participation and success. Institutions were asked to give examples including the names and contact information for those responsible for the evaluation of the data and activities.

Initiatives and Actions to Improve Diversity and Services to Underrepresented Student Populations

The state's *Closing the Gaps* plan establishes a goal of enrolling an additional 500,000 students, based on figures from 2000, in higher education by 2015. To achieve that goal, the state will have to enroll an additional 300,000 academically prepared students

beyond the 200,000 expected to enroll based on past trends. The majority of these students will be first-generation students who face barriers such as navigating the financial aid system and maintaining the motivation to enroll. The state must continue to develop strategies and initiatives to address these students' needs. Also each campus should strengthen its institution-wide programs, activities, and curriculum that celebrate diversity. It is critical that each institution align its Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategic plan with the targets it sets for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps*.

All institutions should conduct college enrollment workshops for high school students in their area. These workshops have proven to be a successful way to enroll students in higher education. A template for the workshops is provided on the Coordinating Board website at www.thecb.state.tx.us. Representatives from institutions can be trained to conduct these workshops.

Institutions should form other partnerships, too, with their local high schools to develop relationships that will be instrumental in recruitment and retention efforts.

All institutions should become part of the *College for Texans* Campaign collaboratives as well. More information is available at:
http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/SAMC/campaign/index.cfm

College for Texans Campaign Activities

Institutions were asked about their participation in the *College for Texans* campaign activities, including College Enrollment Workshops, GO Train-the-Trainer Workshops, GO Centers, and GO Theater Motivational Groups. Institutions were asked to report the number of students, parents, elementary, middle and high schools served as well as the funding dedicated to the activities.

In addition, institutions should add additional summer bridge programs and first-year emphasis programs that cover student assessment, academic advising, mentoring, tutoring, and supplemental class instruction issues. They should also consider workshops in life skills, study skills, and money and time management.

Other campus-based support services that all institutions should implement include:

- Work-study and internship opportunities with local employers
- Study skills classes
- Formation of student support groups
- Access to equipment resources (e.g., laptop computers)
- Facilitation of greater student-faculty interaction

Initiatives to Improve Participation and Success of Underrepresented Populations and/or First-Generation Low-Income Students

Programs and initiatives that can improve the success of underrepresented students include:

- Extended student orientation
- Learner-centered teaching
- Curriculum that celebrates diversity
- Student success courses, and bridge programs
- "Early alert" systems
- Qualitative and effective advisement and counseling systems
- Access to faculty
- Academic support services (tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing and math labs, study skills assessment)
- Access to appropriate role models (teachers, mentors, speakers, staff)
- Institution-wide programs and activities that celebrate diversity

For at-risk students, special programs should be developed, such as a summer bridge and first-year emphasis program which includes:

- Student assessment
- Academic advising
- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Supplemental class instruction
- Workshops in life skills, study skills, money and time management

Institutions were asked to report the number of students served by the activity, how the activity is evaluated, how the activity could be made more effective, as well as the funding dedicated to the activity.

Success/Retention Activities

As with the first-generation student activities, institutions were asked to report on their top three successful retention programs, the number of students served by the activity,

how the activity could be made more effective, as well as the funding dedicated to the activity.

Best Practices Identified in the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategic Plans

- Institutional financial commitment to enrollment management plan
- Trained and talented professional and support staff
- Offering support services to students
- Pre-college programs
- Community and business involvement
- Articulation agreements

Examples of Best Practices Found in Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategic Plans

Best practices from the plans indicate a variety of effective approaches. These programs share five characteristics. Most programs focus on both recruitment and retention. First, they are developed and implemented to increase the numbers of minority students on campuses. Second, they establish specific goals and offer a variety of services to achieve the goals. Third, all of the programs are funded by the institution and external sources, and diversity and strength of the funding is important to the continuation of the programs and demonstrates the support from the community. Fourth, strong lines of communication between the institution and the neighboring community schools, community colleges, and business leaders are an important component. The ease by which others could replicate the program in Texas was also an important consideration.

Examples of the best practices include:

- ***The Academy for Collegiate Excellence and Student Success (ACCESS),*** **Prairie View A&M University.** The Academy for Collegiate Excellence and Student Success (ACCESS) motivates "at-risk" students to succeed in college. The program has two primary components: an intensive, residential pre-college effort in the summer and a holistic, centralized student support effort during the freshman year. As of fall 2002, 552 of 654 students completing the pre-college component enrolled at Prairie View A&M. Student persistence from the freshman to sophomore year is higher among program participants than other students, and participants complete more hours and earn a higher first-semester GPA than the freshman class overall. Also, ACCESS participants in 1996 have a six-year graduation rate that is 11 percent higher than the rate for other students.

- ***Entering Student Program*****, The University of Texas at El Paso**. The University of Texas at El Paso developed the Entering Student Program (ESP) to help ensure the academic success of its first-year students. The first component,

called the University Studies Seminar, provides a rigorous academic curriculum, with tutoring and learning support, in a small class setting. The second component, called Learning Communities, allows a community of students to enroll in the same two or three core courses, which may be clustered around a common theme. Students who participate in the program have persistence rate of approximately 80 percent, compared to approximately 69 percent for non-participants. In addition, the program has received national recognition.

- ***Increasing the Success of the Most Economically Disadvantaged Students*, West Texas A&M University**. This effort is significantly improving the academic success and persistence levels of its most economically disadvantaged students --students who are not expected, based on analysis of their applications for financial aid, to be able to contribute any of their own funds to pay for college. Through cross-campus collaboration among financial aid, admissions, and academic advising officials, the college persistence rate for these students has increased steadily from approximately 32 percent to nearly 65 percent.

- ***Rising Star Program*, Dallas County Community College District**. Since 1999, the Rising Star Program has provided funds ($4,000 in fall 2003) to high-achieving high school graduates with financial need to help them pay for tuition, books, and other college needs at colleges within the district. To date, 3,787 students -- many of whom are first-generation-in-college students and need developmental education -- have benefited from the program. More than 70 percent of participants maintain a "C" average or better, and they also have above-average college persistence and graduation rates.

Other best practices reported by institutions are posted on the Coordinating Board website at http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/ane/default.htm.

Recommendations

The Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy helps identify, attract, enroll, and retain students who reflect the population of Texas. The strategy is a *Closing the Gaps* strategy for meeting the plan's success goal. **It is critical that each institution continue to align its recruitment and retention strategy with the targets it sets for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps*.**

The Coordinating Board staff is providing the following recommendations to assist institutions with the targets for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps*. In addition, the successful recruitment and retention strategies will be compiled for dissemination to the institutions on the Coordinating Board website and at the annual Recruitment and Retention Conference. The staff will continue to make presentations at regional meetings to facilitate sharing best practices among institutions. The staff continues to encourage partnerships and cross-institutional visits between recruitment and retention contacts at each institution.

All Texas public colleges and universities should:

- Continue to align the Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategic plan with the targets it sets for moving toward the participation and success goals of *Closing*

the Gaps. The targets can be found on the Coordinating Board website at http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/pdf/0621G.pdf

- Continue to partner with the *College for Texans* Campaign to spread the message about the value of a college education and the financial aid that is available.

- Form partnerships with high schools in their area and include college enrollment workshops as part of a service that they offer to the students. These partnerships should include collaboration with high school counselors and teachers.

- Form partnerships and collaborations with the business community to provide grants and scholarships to students in financial need.

- Create incentives and requirements for seamless student transitions among high schools, community and technical colleges, universities and health-related institutions.

- Identify additional resources that may be needed--beyond state resources--from federal sources, private and charitable foundations, and corporate and individual donors, in order to sustain progress toward recruiting and retaining a student population that reflects the face of Texas and to close gaps in participation and success.

- Strengthen intervention strategies where the institution takes the initiative. These strategies, also known as "intrusive intervention", involve advising or counseling for students as a model for retention.

- Continue to include faculty in their recruitment and retention efforts.

- Provide role models and mentors for students, faculty, and administrators.

- Strengthen recruitment of minority students and involve minority alumni for recruitment and retention efforts.

- Form relationships with minority community leaders to enhance their recruitment and retention efforts.

- Bring in minority speakers, especially at events exclusively for minority students and their parents.

- Strengthen campus-wide information systems to tie different systems and data together in a seamless information system.

The Texas Legislature should consider funding a Texas recruitment and retention success program modeled after the successful U.S. Department of Education TRIO programs to assist colleges and universities in their recruitment and retention efforts.

Appendix A: Timeline for Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy

- July 2003 – Advisory Committee on Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy appointed by Commissioner of Higher Education
- July 2003 – Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy Update Report Form created and approved by Advisory Committee
- August & September 2003 – Technical Assistance Workshops held on Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy Update Report Form
- June 22, 2004 – Advisory Committee Panel Discussion at the Annual Recruitment and Retention Conference
- July 15-16,2004 – Advisory Committee Report to Coordinating Board members and Texas Legislature
- December 1, 2004 – Due date for Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategic Plan updates

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