

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College Response to Washington Advisory Group Report

From its establishment in 1992 as a unique partnership between a university and community college, The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College has upheld access and excellence as core values in fulfilling our mission as an open-door community university on the South Texas border. UTB/TSC is pleased to have the consultancy viewpoint of the Washington Advisory Group to help in strategically focusing our research-building capacity at this 12-year juncture of our institution.

Recognition by the WAG of our extraordinary research potential in physics and biology and our innovativeness as exemplified by our initiatives at the International Technical Education and Commerce Campus helps us realize how far we have come. Recommendations in other areas deserve elaboration.

Collaborations--In recent years, collaborative work with sister components has helped to increase degree offerings, research projects, and student outreach programs, and it has allowed us to leverage our library resources and achieve savings in purchasing. Partners in these collaborations have included UT Health Science Center in San Antonio, UT Pan American, UT El Paso, UT Health Science Center in Houston, and UT Dallas.

Articulation--A seamless transition to upper-level classes was paramount in obtaining the partnership. The largest percentage of students remains at the lower level; however, our growth in upper-level enrollment has increased by 32.4%, since fall 1998. UTB/TSC led the state in developing the Bachelor of Applied Technology and the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences degrees to help students with applied associate degrees to achieve a baccalaureate degree by maximizing their technical credits.

Retention and Graduation--Our first-time, full-time, fall-to-fall retention rate is 60.8%, which is the third highest retention rate of any community college in Texas and compares favorably with many other four-year state universities. Of the first-time, full-time freshmen who enrolled in fall 1992 in TSC, 28.1% received their bachelor's degree within 10 years. An analysis of Coordinating Board figures indicates little change between the six-year and 10-year rates at all UT components, except for UTB/TSC, where the 10-year rate is 187% higher than the six-year rate. This persistence often includes developmental classes that bolster their skills. Almost 28% of our students who received master's degrees in education in 2002/2003 began as undergraduates requiring developmental classes. Our most recent cohort of undergraduate students in education preparation passed the EXCET certification examination at a 92% rate. Even with figures showing that UTB/TSC students complete their goal when given more time, we are strengthening our work to compress graduation time by hiring additional academic advisors, promoting incentives, increasing financial assistance, and cooperating with area school districts to provide college credit to high school students.

Faculty Hiring--UTB/TSC is proud of the diverse faculty we have attracted through national searches. Hiring quality faculty to sustain present academic programs and to grow critically needed new ones is a top budgetary priority in FY2004-05. The ratio of FTE faculty to our 10,954 students is 1-to-32, as compared with the 1-to-17 ratio for our "accountability peer group." To reach parity with peers, we should have 295 more professors – now. Revenues from small tuition increases for fall 2004 are earmarked mostly for 23 new, strategically identified faculty lines.

We are "pushing the envelope" in research, education, innovation and service, and we shall continue to do so. In complete agreement with the WAG Report, it is our goal to achieve the Carnegie Classification of "Doctoral/Research Intensive" within the next 10 years. We are grateful to be included, for the first time ever, in a study that recognizes our potential to contribute to advanced research in Texas.