



Conexión

The University of Texas Rio Grande's has aligned its own sustained and impactful professional development model, *Conexión*, with their ESP projects to great effect. Faculty members who were part of ESP projects subsequently participate in *Conexión*.

The *Conexión* First Year Student Success Academy is an immersive 6-day, 18-hour workshop series for UTRGV faculty teaching high first year enrollment courses. Topics include belonging, learning processes, student experiences and motivation, first year student and course data, and equity-conscious design. Faculty work in small, interdisciplinary, and mixed-rank teams with trained faculty facilitators and student consultants to discuss, develop, and integrate course designs connected to student engagement. Participants develop and complete a (re)designed assignment, activity, syllabus, etc. during the course of the series. After the series, participants integrate their work in their class(es) with feedback from their facilitators and "Students as Learners and Teachers" consultants before submitting final self-evaluations and reflections on the impact of their changes.

What We Can Learn for ESP

The *Conexión* model illustrates how integrating mentorship, reflective inquiry, and structured learning communities into faculty professional development can strengthen relational trust, deepen engagement with student experiences, and align pedagogical redesign with goals to remove barriers and close gaps in outcomes. ESP teams might adopt similar community-based PD structures—pairing faculty-advisors and student consultants with cohorts, embedding structured reflection, and facilitating peer learning—to cultivate champions grounded in students lived context while advancing redesign and data agency.