



Phase 3 Institutional PAIR Cohort Projects and Members

The *EQUITABLE STUDENT PATHWAYS* Project *Building Capacity towards Resilience, Sustainability, and Scale*

The University of Texas System Lumina and Trellis Foundations Grant

Project Overview

The Equitable Student Pathways (ESP) Project is an initiative of The University of Texas System that aims to improve student success by redesigning curricular pathways at each of the UT System’s nine academic institutions. The ESP project combines the power of data with a proven change model to design new pathways to support more students to enter and complete quality degree programs.

Supported by generous funding from the Lumina and Trellis Foundations, the ESP project:

- **Positions the curriculum as the locus of change to achieve equitable student success**, a domain that has been traditionally siloed from student success offices and initiatives.
- **Cultivates data agency through an iterative change model** – the Participatory Action Institutional Research model (PAIR) – that brings together institutional teams, referred to as “PAIR Cohorts,” to dive deep into data and develop action plans designed to close gaps in outcomes, remove barriers to student success, and re-envision curricular structures and disciplinary pathways.
- **Identifies institutional projects and action plans that align with longer-term institutional goals** and include concrete strategies for implementation, assessment, and stakeholder engagement.

Between Fall 2021 and Summer 2023, the ESP Project funded a total of thirteen institutional cohorts focused on identifying a student success challenge and developing an action plan to address it.

Thanks to continued funding from the Lumina Foundation and additional funding from the Trellis Foundation the next phase of the project, ESP 2 (September 2023 – August 2025) will support additional projects and implementation, while working towards capacity building, sustainability, and institutionalization of the PAIR change model.

UT System ESP Team

Paula Bales, Senior Decision Support Analyst, Office of Institutional Research & Analysis (OIRA)

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Dr. Marlena Creusere, Executive Director, OIRA

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UT Arlington – Reexamining curriculum and student supports for English and math developmental education

The number of students that are placed into developmental education has grown by more than 300% at UT Arlington in the years following the pandemic. Most of these students are first-time-in-college, at higher risk of attrition according to historical data and predictive modeling and include a disproportionate share of racial and ethnic minorities, late enrollees, Pell recipients, and conditionally admitted students. This population of students also face longer time-to-degree and may be leaving with institutional debt at rates higher than comparable populations.

UT Arlington’s project will do a deep dive into understanding this population, including student experiences in developmental education courses and curricula. The project will examine and re-envision the curriculum and student support related to developmental education, including the staff, faculty, financial, and other resources. The project is aligned with the UT Arlington’s strategic goal of achieving a 90% first-year retention rate and is intentionally connected with its new MAVS Rise program for conditionally admitted students, as well as to systemwide initiatives focused on corequisite capacity building, Hispanic Servingness, advising, the Student Experience Project, and ACUE.

Project Lead:

Dr. Ashley Purgason, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success, Office of the Provost

PAIR Cohort Members:

Laura Boddicker, Lecturer, Mathematics Department

Dr. Esteban Diaz, Assistant Professor of Instruction, Mathematics Department

Deysi Delgado, Lecturer, Mathematics Department

Laura Holm, Coordinator III, Mathematics Department

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Alternate:

Catherine Unite, Director, Academic Success Center, Division of Student Success

UT System Project Facilitators: Jeremy Martin and Jen Griffis

UT Austin – The Second-Year Experience Project

UT Austin’s Second-Year Experience Project (SYE) will address the lack of belonging and more challenged academic achievement (e.g., higher DFW rates) for second-year students (a population identified in Austin’s 2022 Equitable Student Pathways Phase 1 project). The project will adopt a three-phase approach, each with the second year as the focus:

- 1) Connection bringing together PAIR cohort members and other relevant faculty and administrators around data agency and action and curricular interventions;
- 2) Reflection with deeper dives into student achievement and experience data in identified courses, including attention to pedagogy and content; and
- 3) Growth which will identify exemplar second year courses as models using quantitative and qualitative data.

The SYE Project is aligned with UT Austin’s strategic plan and integrated with the Course Clarity Project. It also has as an overarching goal to improve the university’s decentralized data culture in ways that are critical to achieving more institution-wide data access and agency.

Project Lead:

Dr. Heather Mikkelsen Wright, Assistant Director for Assessment & Experiential Learning, UT Center for Teaching & Learning

PAIR Cohort Members:

April Barnes, Director, University Leadership Network, Undergraduate College
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UT System Project Facilitator: Paula Bales



UT Dallas – The Math Pathways project focuses on the calculus sequence to ensure more students successfully complete calculus on the pathway to STEM majors.

Mathematics classes in general, and calculus classes in particular, are crucial to many majors across UT Dallas. Building on its first Equitable Student Pathways project in 2022, UTD’s Math Pathways project aims to:

- 1) Incorporate instructor facilitated diagnostics into the curriculum to cultivate student self-awareness and self-efficacy, while informing instructor teaching and collaborations with student support services;
- 2) Use technology to improve instructors’ ability to identify and refer struggling students to appropriate resources to create more student-centric, proactive outreach early in the math pathway; and
- 3) Explore a co-requisite model to combine first-semester differential calculus with a course dedicated to enhancing content mastery in fundamentals such as pre-calculus.

First-semester math courses (e.g., Differential Calculus or Calculus 1) serve a high concentration of all STEM majors, including students from the Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science and School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. This project intends to enhance outcomes for all students with a special emphasis on students vulnerable to underperformance or attrition based on scores on a math placement exam (ALEKS) and UT System-provided retention index scores, as well as first-generation, underrepresented, and transfer students, addressing gaps in outcomes that have persisted since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project will leverage Curricular Analytics data, its math OER project, and advance UTD’s commitment to institutionalizing Hispanic Servingness.

Project Lead:

Dr. Vladimir Dragovic, Professor of Mathematics & Head of Mathematical Sciences Department

PAIR Cohort Members:

- Dr. Kelly Aman, Associate Professor of Instruction, Mathematical Sciences Department
- Dr. Swati Biswas, Professor of Statistics & Associate Department Head, Mathematical Sciences Department
- Dr. Courtney Brecheen, Senior Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education
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- Dr. Rabin Dahal, Associate Professor of Instruction, Mathematical Sciences Department
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Alternate:

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UT System Project Facilitators: Jeremy Martin and John Dinning





THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

UT El Paso – Exploring underlying reasons for longer time-to-degree and higher SCH for students in the BSEE in Electrical Engineering, with attention to the complex degree plan and math readiness.

The BSEE in Electrical Engineering is a highly complex degree plan and UT El Paso's data show that students average nearly six years to complete it. UTEP's engagement with the UERU Curricular Analytics Projects reveals that its BSEE is the most complex in the College of Engineering and more complex than other undergraduate programs across the country. The SCH-to-degree numbers for those who graduated in Electrical Engineering are higher than those for other degree plans in the College of Engineering and other degree plans at the university. The time-to-degree challenge is greater for first-generation and first-time-in-college students than for others, and navigating the first two years of the program seems to be a particular problem.

The UTEP project will explore data underlying these differences, focusing on math readiness, grades, the degree plan, and major flow. This aligns with UTEP's work with the UERU Curricular Analytics project, as well as its goals for improving degree attainment as a majority minority-serving institution. The project continues the foundational work done in the previous two ESP projects, further advances institutional goals and initiatives (Hispanic Servingness, Holistic Advising, and the UTEP Edge), and will contribute to overall institutionalization of the PAIR cohort model expanding efforts to cultivate data-driven decision-making and agency in reexamining academic majors and pathways.

Project Lead:

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PAIR Cohort Members:

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UT System Project Facilitator: Kasey Klepfer





UT Permian Basin – Addressing under-preparation of students in college math through data, OER, and a redesign of developmental education.

The project focuses on the under-preparation of students in math, especially underserved students entering UT Permian Basin who lack both math readiness and access to required math textbooks and materials on day one. A variety of data will play a critical role in identifying gaps in outcomes by student populations, including DFWUI rates, when students take and retake math, stop-out patterns linked to math, the impact on other majors requiring strong math preparation, and financial need data. The project will redesign three first-year math courses with a focus on co-requisite education and new “textbook pathways” through Open Educational Resources (OER) adoption and providing support to faculty with data, professional development, and resources.

Math readiness and success is an institution-wide priority, involving many units, support services, and academic majors for which math is critical. The project supports institutional strategic goals around time-to-degree and degrees awarded and aligns with UTPB and UT System initiatives on Open Educational Resources, Hispanic Servingness, and co-requisite capacity building.

Project Lead:

Dr. Michael Frawley, Dean of Student Success

PAIR Cohort Members:

Dr. Paul Feit, Chair & Professor, Mathematics Department

Dr. Jim Hunt, Associate Provost, Academic Affairs Department

Demi Moorhead, Graduation Help Desk Coordinator, Student Success Department

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UT System Project Facilitators: Rebecca Karoff and Kayla Fairchild-Gonzalez





UT Rio Grande Valley – Redesigning the Bachelor’s in Social Work curriculum

UT Rio Grande Valley seeks to redesign the Bachelor's in Social Work curriculum to enhance research and critical thinking skills, increase critical consciousness, and ensure that students' lived experiences are reflected in readings, assignments, and activities. Most of UTRGV's students (91%) are Hispanic, from border communities, and overwhelmingly low-income, yet the curriculum is largely Eurocentric. According to trend data released by the Association of Social Work Boards, between 2011 and 2021, only 59% of Hispanic/Latino students passed the LBSW exam, making them ineligible to work as social workers and contributing to workforce shortages. The redesign will ensure better preparation for UTRGV students to pass the licensing exam upon graduation and will better prepare them for graduate school. It is also timed with the program's re-accreditation cycle.

The project is focused on the students in the program, gaps in outcomes, and the need to do a deep, data-informed redesign of the major that is culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of students, the region, and profession. It will follow the Gina Garcia's Servingness model, focus on pedagogy and curricular content, align with multiple systemwide student success initiatives and with UTRGV's plan for institutionalizing the PAIR change model, including integrating the university's professional development program, Conexion, into this process as a critical purveyor of student-centered, equity-grounded professional development and transformation.

Project Lead:

Dr. Jonikka Charlton, Vice Provost for Student Success

PAIR Cohort Members:

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UT System Project Facilitator: Rebecca Karoff

UT San Antonio – Career-engaged learning

Closely aligned with UT San Antonio’s strategic plan and building on the university’s first two Equitable Student Pathways projects, this project will take a systems approach to developing a workforce credentialing framework to close identified gaps in outcomes. It will focus on developing and embedding micro credentials in selected core curriculum classes, which most students must take. Early analysis of SteppingBlocks data of UTSA alumni indicates that the starting salary for recent graduates lags the state average, particularly for non-STEM majors. Likewise, internal analysis of student resumes reveals that students are struggling to articulate the skills they obtain in the core curriculum classes, which may be impacting both time-to-degree and starting salaries upon graduation, two of the gaps in student outcomes the project seeks to close.

Through the previous PAIR projects, UTSA has operationalized several initiatives aimed at improving equitable outcomes for students. Various units across campus have elevated their data agency in pursuit of curricular redesign, and the time is right to bring these groups together to work more collaboratively to address equity gaps from an industry-access perspective. The proposed project aligns closely with UTSA’s strategic plan and systematic efforts to promote learning and career readiness for all students, integrates the UERU Curricular Analytics Project, and the Classroom to Career Initiative, among other strategic endeavors.

Project Leads:

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PAIR Cohort Members:

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Dr. Michael Rushforth, Assistant Department Chair, Modern Languages & Literatures
Dr. Rebecca Schroeder, Interim Associate Dean of University College
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Alternates:

Dr. Ginnifer Cie Gee, Associate Vice Provost Career Engaged Learning
Bryan Heard, CEL Director of Operations

UT System Project Facilitator: Nichole Prescott



Stephen F. Austin State University – Redesigning development education in English

This project seeks to improve co-requisite instruction for students that are non-TSI compliant in developmental reading and writing. This heterogenous population has grown significantly post-Covid. However, the university is currently using a one-size-fits all approach that is neither effective nor efficient. SFA seeks to replace the current lecture-based, 3-credit course with a variable credit developmental writing lab. This initiative supports SFA's strategic goal for students to complete ENGL 1301 and 1302 during their first year at college. This planned curricular redesign is grounded in research on writing labs as a space that can build student autonomy and agency with college-level reading and writing.

The PAIR project will facilitate data discovery and project planning to help us optimize our developmental writing lab model; implement meaningful and feasible multiple measures for student placement; determine the necessary time and resources to build a multi-modal, just-in-time, scaffolded developmental reading and writing curriculum; and define key objectives for assessment of the lab and student learning outcomes, both short-term and longitudinal.

This project will explore ways to integrate experiential learning into the lab and engage the SFA Maker's Space and the Advising Center, with potential alignment with micro credentialing and Open Educational Resources.

Project Lead:

Dr. Elizabeth Tasker Davis, Professor & Chair, English & Creative Writing Department

PAIR Cohort Members:

Dr. Lesa Beverly, Professor & Chair, Mathematics Department

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Dr. Meta Henty, Lecturer & Assistant Coordinator of First-Year Writing, English & Creative Writing Department

Dr. Joyce Johnston, Professor & Associate Dean, College of Liberal & Applied Arts

Tricia Lance, TSI Coordinator/Academic Advisor, Student Success Center

Dr. Jason McIntosh, Assistant Professor & Coordinator of First-Year Writing, English & Creative Writing Department

Dr. Jeana Paul Urena, Professor & Chair, Languages, Culture & Communications Department

UT System Project Facilitators: Kasey Klepfer and Jen Griffis



UT Tyler – Exploring and improving gateway course in the university’s largest majors

UT Tyler will explore the grade distributions and Curricular Analytics data in gateway courses from the largest majors in each of the university’s four colleges and two schools with undergraduate students. This project aligns with UT Tyler's Strategic Plan to focus on improving student retention and persistence in earning their degrees. Specifically, UT Tyler seeks to understand the impact of gateway courses on student decision points (e.g., changing majors and attrition), appropriate curricular and pedagogical approaches, and the complexity for students taking gateway courses in their major.

The six undergraduate majors in the project are: Nursing, Biology, Psychology, Kinesiology, Mechanical Engineering, and Management. The team will explore the grade distributions in these majors, focusing on who is well served (grades of A, B, or C) and who is not (grades less than C). UTT will also focus on grades of W, indicating the student gave up hope in the course. These efforts will enable UTT to home in on needed course redesign, changes to the pedagogical approaches used in the course, advising into the major, and support needed along with the curricula.

The project builds on UT Tyler’s first two ESP projects and is strongly aligned with UT Tyler’s strategic plan and goals, as well as other initiatives, including UERU, ACUE, Hispanic Servingness, and Advising Excellence. With its inclusion of six majors in different colleges, the project is designed to work towards institutionalization of the PAIR change model, improving the university’s data infrastructure and putting actionable data more effectively into the hands of those who can act on it across the institution.

Project Lead:

Dr. Colleen Swain, Associate Provost for Academic Success and Dean of Undergraduate Studies

PAIR Cohort Members:

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Jared Dickson, Lecturer, Biology Department

Dr. X. Neil Dong, Professor, Kinesiology Department

Gina Dudley, Clinical Instructor of Nursing

Brandy Meadows, Lecturer, Management Department

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UT System Project Facilitator: Marlena Creusere