



Rural Student Success Initiative

Summary

With support from the Greater Texas Foundation and T.L.L. Temple Foundation, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is launching a major rural student success demonstration project in eleven Texas counties. The goal of the AgriLife Extension Rural Student Success Initiative (the "Initiative") is to increase the number of rural students enrolling in and completing a postsecondary certificate or degree program.

Lack of resources and support has led to an isolated population of rural students and parents that is less savvy about college planning and less likely to attempt and complete a postsecondary credential than their urban peers. Although there is no uniform definition of "rural," the number of rural students in Texas is indisputably large - perhaps as high as 900,000 - and widely dispersed across many of the state's small- to medium-sized school districts.

Texas' vast rural landscape presents a logistical challenge to delivering a consistent framework of college access and success supports to rural students and their parents. To overcome this challenge, the Initiative will take advantage of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's unique statewide platform of place-based county agents and youth development staff. The Initiative will pair Extension's place-based platform with two best-in-class college access/success organizations, College Forward and the National College Access Network (NCAN), to provide students, their parents and schools with information and services shown to increase college participation and success. College Forward's student and parent support framework and data system will drive the work of the Initiative. NCAN's expertise in professional development will support both the central office and demonstration sites.

The Initiative will engage four key constituencies to influence student academic goal-setting and success: students; parents/adult caregivers; rural schools (leaders, and instructional and counseling staff); and AgriLife Extension Agents. The Initiative will focus its support strategies on three distinct sections of the access/

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completion pipeline to support rural students and their parents: Grades 8-12; the summer melt period between high school graduation and college matriculation; and postsecondary retention/completion. The distinct strategies deployed within each of these critical stages of a student's academic pathway are predicted to result in achieving the Initiative's primary purpose which is the completion of a postsecondary certificate or degree program.

The Initiative will be led by a Director, and centrally staffed with College Access, College Success and Data specialists. The central office will deploy a cadre of part-time leadership coaches to provide ongoing support to the county agents within the demonstration sites. A local leadership team of school leaders and counselors, parents and community leaders will be recruited and led by the County Extension Agent. This local team will work with their schools and community based organizations to implement College Forward's curricular framework to support all students and parents in Grades 8-12 and during the summer before their first day of college to mitigate summer melt. Once in college, the Initiative will replicate College Forward's college retention/completion support strategies remotely and through on-campus visits to regional institutions.

Participating Counties:

- Angelina
- Bee
- Cameron
- Dimmit
- Fannin
- Jasper
- Lamar
- Nolan
- San Augustine
- Trinity
- Zavala

