

Progress Report

Objective 1: Increase the number of under-represented students who declare a Nutrition major to 8 in year 1, has been met and surpassed. La Cena had 13 self-identified Nutrition majors at the Alamo Colleges (AC) for Academic Year 08-09. Objective 2: Increase the year-to-year retention rate of under-represented students majoring in Nutrition to 63% in year 1, has been met and surpassed to 69.1%. Currently, we are using the overall San Antonio College year-to-year student retention rate, because historical data is not yet available for Nutrition majors. Objective 3: Increase the number of under-represented Nutrition majors who transfer from the AC to the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) or Texas State University (Texas State) to 5 for each University, in year one, was not met for Texas State (3), and was met and exceeded for the UIW (6). Objective 4: Increase the annual retention rate of under-represented Nutrition majors who transferred to UIW or Texas State to 74% and 85% respectively, in year 1, has not been met for Texas State (66.7%) or UIW (50%).

The project was scheduled to start-up in Fall 08. However, at this time, the foundation was laid, but the PM was not hired until March 09 (Spring). In Fall 08, the La Cena website was to be developed and maintained; however, this did not occur until after the PM was hired. Also, academic support was to be provided in Fall 08; this was also not possible until organized by the PM in Spring 09.

Recruiting high school seniors and college students was done successfully. The PM was able to speak to approximately 137 high school students and 11 teachers, as well as 160 college students and 3 instructors. Scholarships were not awarded in Spring 09; even though this activity was on the timetable, there was not money in the budget to provide scholarships in year one. As of Spring 09, the La Cena website was developed, maintained, and accrued over 200 hits. Furthermore, La Cena was able to provide consistent academic support, and coordinate mentoring with UIW and Texas State students (which will take effect in Fall 09). La Cena was not able to host monthly presentations by Nutrition professionals (aka Nutrition Lecture Series) at this time due to the professionals not being scheduled until the PM was on staff. The Nutrition Lecture Series (NLS) will also start promptly in Fall 09. Students were not able to join a professional association, attend conferences, or visit the USDA-ARS, because these were activities not able to be planned out, due to late hiring of a PM. However, all of these activities are now scheduled and planned to be implemented Fall 09. The Hands-on Nutrition Workshop at UIW and Texas State and touring the Universities, was not possible for the same reason and has the same expectations for Fall 09.

The activities for the Summer 09 timetable included continued development and maintenance of the website and providing academic support, which were both accomplished successfully. The timetable also included NLS and students joining a professional association / attending state conference, which was not carried out for reasons stated previously.

Publications

Products

Project A:

The La Cena website (www.projectlacena.com) was developed to provide students, teachers, and anyone else who is interested, a quick and easy way to read about what La Cena is and what it does. The

website also outlines all of the services and opportunities available for students including scholarships, mentors, free professional memberships, fieldtrips, and advising. Furthermore, the website has a section on career guidance including interviews with Professionals in Nutrition and Food Science. Our website also includes related links, contact information, and a blog to inform students of upcoming activities and weekly Nutrition tips.

Project B:

La Cena brochures and flyers were created, handed-out and mailed to high school teachers in related fields to inform them about La Cena. The brochures and flyers include a brief summary of our grant, our objectives, and information about our services, and possible careers available with a degree in Nutrition and contact information. The flyers, along with posters are posted throughout Northeast Lakeview College. As of Fall 2009, the flyers will be posted throughout San Antonio College as well.

Project C:

Nine Interviews with professionals in various areas of the Nutrition and Food Science field have been conducted. These interviews include a variety of questions related to the Nutrition field, education, and work experience, as well as pictures of the professionals. Some of the interviews include short video clips and curriculum vitae.

Project D:

The PM provides personal individual advising to Nutrition Majors at the Alamo Colleges to inform them of the classes needed to take at the community college level to prepare them to transfer to a University to obtain a degree in Nutrition. Sample degree plans are available on the La Cena website.

Project E:

The Alamo Colleges each have an academic success center that La Cena can refer them to, in order to provide tutoring in subjects that students are struggling with. Furthermore, the PM has personally tutored a student who wanted to retake the Accuplacer.

Project F:

La Cena has coordinated mentoring with students from Texas State and UIW to mentor La Cena students, attend and assist with La Cena activities and events, as well as assist the PM with recruiting high school students.

Project G:

The PM has and will continue to visit with high school students, teachers, and Alamo College students and teachers in related fields to educate them about the career opportunities available with a Nutrition Degree and how La Cena can assist students with obtaining a degree in Nutrition.

Project H:

The Nutrition Lecture Series are scheduled to start Fall 09. These professionals will come to Northeast Lakeview College (NLC) to speak about what they are currently studying / working on in their field, how they got into Nutrition, and what a day on the job looks like for them, as well as anything else they would like to share with our students to offer some insight about the actual field.

Project I:

The Hands on Nutrition Workshop at UIW and Texas State will familiarize our students with the food lab, allow them to meet with faculty, and have mentors accompany them. Campus tours will guide our students around the University and give a briefing on financial aid and admissions.

Outcomes

Project A:

The website is an efficient tool to allow students and teachers who are interested in our Program to learn about it. If a student is unable to meet with the PM, they can be directed to the website, where the student will be able to get a briefing of what their degree plan will look like, application links for memberships and scholarships, and information on what programs are available to them post Alamo Colleges, as well as career opportunities. Furthermore, the website also contains contact information for the stakeholders directly involved in the Grant. The website will also be a useful tool to post upcoming Nutrition Lecture Series Speakers and other upcoming events. Students are more likely to join and participate in a program when information is easily accessible.

Project B:

According to our surveys, flyers have been the most effective means of recruiting students for La Cena. Since the flyers are posted throughout the college and in the advising department, students are steadily contacting the PM to find out more about the program. As time progresses, La Cena intends to make their flyers more widespread. Brochures allow a more detailed explanation of the project to be handed out once students express interest. Brochures are also given to high school teachers in order to provide a convenient way for them to have contact information of the PM, should they want to set up a day for the PM to come and speak to their class on the benefits of La Cena. Posters, being larger and simpler, catch the attention of more students and teachers so that they can inquire further.

Project C:

Interviews of Professionals in Nutrition and Food Science are posted on the website, and allow students an easy and interactive way to learn about the different career opportunities available with a degree in Nutrition. Knowing what careers are available and what they are like, will influence students to feel more secure about obtaining a degree and a job in the Nutrition Field. Students knowing what to do with their degree once they get it, is almost as vital as obtaining the degree.

Project D:

Advising is essential for the success of the Project. The advisors do not know what classes students need to take at a community college to prepare them for obtaining a degree in Nutrition at a university. Therefore, the advisors direct students to the PM, who then not only gets to lay out a personalized two year degree plan for the students while they are at the Alamo colleges , but also gets to introduce the students to the program. Students need to take their Algebra and Chemistries at the community college level in order to be caught up with other nutrition majors upon entering the University. Students coming from the community college academically prepared are more likely to be successful at the University.

Project E:

As you may or may not know, a degree in Nutrition is significantly heavy in the area of required science courses. This is the area that most students, seeking a degree in Nutrition, struggle with. Therefore, having a resource to direct students to receive academic support and pass their classes is imperative to a successful retention rate. Furthermore, students who place poorly in the Math section of the Accuplacer could be required to take up to four remedial Math courses before they are eligible for a College Algebra course. This could set students back significantly in their Chemistry courses (college algebra is a prerequisite). Therefore, academic support is needed for these students so that they are able to test into and be prepared for high level math courses and take required chemistry courses successfully.

Project F:

Texas State and UIW students mentoring students at the Alamo colleges will give them guidance and support during their schooling at the community college and transition into a University; thus ensuring a successful retention rate. Furthermore, these mentors can assist the PM with recruiting high school students by providing a bright, young face of an actual student at a University. High school students having interaction with a college student will enlighten them to start thinking about attending college themselves.

Project G:

Recruitment of high school seniors and college students is a necessity of our project; without recruiting these students, we would not have a successful project. Recruiting students allows us to have a growing foundation of students interested in Nutrition to meet our objectives of the Grant, and have these students transfer to a university and graduate with a degree in Nutrition.

Project H:

This year, La Cena has successfully planned for the Nutrition Lecture Series to start Fall 2009. Similar to the interviews, but more personal, these presentations will allow students to meet professionals in the Nutrition field and discuss their job. Upon hearing the different professionals' presentations on their careers, students can make an informed decision on the kind of job that they would like once they have a degree. Furthermore, this will allow students to network with professionals already in the field.

Project I:

Hands on Nutrition Workshops at UIW and Texas State, including a tour of the universities, will allow students to become familiar and comfortable with the University. When a student has met the faculty, current students, seen the classrooms, and received a briefing on financial aid and admissions, they will be more likely to apply and feel comfortable with their choice. Students are more likely to choose a university they are familiar with, versus one where they do not know anyone or anything about it. Also, when students get to know their faculty and resources they are more likely to stay at that university.

Dissemination Activities

La Cena's dissemination activities include a Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter account, a monthly newsletter, our website, brochures, flyers, posters, and visiting high school and college level classrooms in order to distribute information to the public and discuss La Cena's achievements, activities, impacts, and more.

Future Initiatives

Activities planned to occur beyond the funding period include applications for similar grants and a continuation of the Student Nutrition Organization at Northeast Lakeview College (NLC), started by Project La Cena. Also, the PM will be sure to educate the advisors at San Antonio College (SAC) and NLC about the courses students need to take to transfer to a university to obtain a degree in Nutrition, so that post the funding period, students will still have a resource for that information.

Impacts

Project A:

The La Cena website will enable prospective high school and community college students to learn about the program, career opportunities in Nutrition and in effect, will declare Nutrition as their major, increasing the number of underrepresented students who declare a nutrition major to 8 in year one of the grant, and to 15 by Spring 2011.

Project B:

The La Cena brochures, flyers, and posters will also enable students and teachers to learn about the project, join the project, and attract underrepresented students to the field of nutrition to promote healthier eating habits and lifestyles.

Project C:

Interviews with Nutrition and Food Science Professionals will further motivate and inform students about career opportunities available with a degree in Nutrition. Once these students decide on a career choice in the Nutrition field, they will be more apt to obtain a career in the Nutrition field and improve health in Central /South Texas due to the addition of well-trained nutritionists to the workforce.

Project D:

Advising provides Nutrition majors at the community college with a clear two year degree plan to take courses at the Alamo colleges which will prepare them to transfer to Texas State or University of the Incarnate Word for an additional two years of school. Therefore, the students also have a clear understanding of the process of becoming a nutritionist, and see a clear process for completing their education, leading to an increased number of underrepresented nutrition majors who transfer to UIW or Texas State to 10 and 10, respectively, by Spring 2011.

Project E:

Academic support will also increase the year-to-year retention rate of underrepresented Nutrition majors (to 64.5% by Spring 2011). Retained nutrition majors are more likely to transfer to a university and complete their degree in nutrition, providing students of diverse backgrounds access to higher education, and increase student success.

Project F:

Mentors will also assist La Cena with meeting its object of increasing the year-to-year retention rate of under-represented students majoring in Nutrition by providing academically achieving students with guidance from experienced students. Mentoring will also assist in increasing the year-year retention rate of underrepresented Nutrition majors at UIW to 78% and Texas State to 98% by Spring 2011. Coordinated mentoring will result in Nutrition majors becoming student leaders in the field and will also be a learning community activity.

Project G:

Recruiting high school students from targeted school districts (with minority enrollments ranging from 44-98%, and economic disadvantaged student populations ranging from 24-91%) will assist in a significant concern facing the Nation: the need to increase Hispanic education levels. By recruiting these students into La Cena, we will be able to advise, retain, provide academic and extracurricular support, develop learning opportunities and provide financial assistance to these underrepresented students. Furthermore, 70% of Hispanic adults are categorized as overweight or obese; if we recruit this population into a field where they are educated about Nutrition, we can significantly lower the percentage of overweight/obese Hispanics, as well as increase the number of Hispanics who enroll in and graduate from college.

Project H:

The Nutrition Lecture Series will enable students to be more educated about what careers are available with their degree in Nutrition. Students will be more likely to choose Nutrition as a major and successfully obtain a career if they are aware of the different jobs available in the Nutrition field and have met professionals with in it. Therefore, monthly lectures by Nutrition professionals will result in an increase of the number of graduates with a bachelors of science in the food and agricultural sciences, which will provide Texas and the nation more nutritionists to improve the nation's nutrition and health by promoting healthier eating habits and lifestyles.

Project I:

Hands on Nutrition Workshops at UIW and Texas State, including a tour of the universities, will result in an increase of underrepresented Nutrition majors who transfer to UIW or Texas State to 10 and 10 respectively, by Spring 2011, as well as increase the retention rate due to students being familiar with the faculty, facilities, and resources, at the University.

Please contact slozano62@alamo.edu for any questions regarding this report.