

Dr. Joe May
Chancellor, Dallas County Community Colleges District

United States of America House of Representatives Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training – April 30, 2015

“Improving College Access and Completion for Low-Income and First-Generation Students”

Thank you, Madam Chair, Ranking Member Hinojosa, and members of the Committee. I am honored to be with you today. My name is Joe May, chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District. On behalf of the great state of Texas, I want to thank you and members of the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training for inviting me to participate in your important deliberations on Improving College Access and Completion for Low-Income and First-Generation Students. The Dallas County Community College District comprises seven colleges that support more than 100,000 students with our 7,000 employees.

Our district promotes student success and the removal of barriers that can prevent them from achieving success. As we have witnessed nationally and locally, changing demographics among our students have prompted changes in how we help them earn a credential, enter the workforce and obtain a living wage.

DCCCD is a Minority Serving Institution, with diverse representation among African and Asian Americans and Latinos. Six of our seven colleges are Hispanic Serving Institutions; the seventh is predominantly African-American. As a predominantly HSI system, DCCCD offers Latino students support measures through TRIO programs and Title V, in addition to early college high schools, STEM programs and dual credit.

In Dallas, the Hispanic population has grown 22 percent, while the number of Dallas residents living in poverty has more than doubled at 52 percent since 2000. While the number of new jobs has increased, people living in poverty cannot access those jobs because 63 percent of the new positions require a least an associate degree or certificate. In fact, 20,000 of our 100,000 students are living in poverty; and, of these, 58.6 percent are Hispanic.

Since being designated as HSIs, DCCCD colleges have closed the gaps in three key areas: 1) district Hispanic enrollment, reflecting the demographics of Dallas; 2) course completion, with Hispanic students completing at the same rate as other groups; and 3) credentials, with Hispanic students earning 31 percent of those awarded in 2014.

Talent Search is enabling us to work with high school students to prepare for college. Upward Bound is assisting our Latino students with the transition to college. Student Support Services is helping them complete the degree. We emphasize completion and credentials so that students can earn a living wage and build a career. Whether in high school or college, students served by TRIO programs have to juggle schools, jobs, and family. These circumstances follow them to college, and TRIO staff provide mentoring and monitoring. At our colleges that serve the most Hispanic students, Student Support Services staff members use case management keep students

engaged in school. As a result, 75 percent of the TRIO participants at Mountain View College are members of student associations, such as student government, Phi Theta Kappa and athletic teams. Last year, almost 70 percent of DCCCD's Hispanic students successfully completed their courses. Both TRIO and Title V services are essential to continue to grow our workforce and the middle class.

We have also engaged with Texas Completes, a statewide multi-college initiative to share data and strategies to improve student outcomes. Efforts through this partnership have led to an increase of 42 percent in certificates and an increase of 33 percent in associate degrees at DCCCD from 2010 to 2014.

Our dual credit and early college high school programs offer additional options for at-risk students. Dual credit enables high school students to earn transferable college credits. DCCCD provides dual credit tuition free to students. Dual credit students also earn more credits per semester than our traditional students, which places at-risk students on the path to completion.

Our six early college high schools enroll nearly 2,000 students; Hispanics comprise 40 percent. They also account for 34.8 percent of the 700 early college high school students who graduate with both a high school diploma and associate degree. Three of these schools have achieved National Blue Ribbon status.

Today, everyone needs education beyond high school. There are no jobs for those who do not have a credential that gives them the tools to earn a living wage.

I believe, in order to ensure that the middle-class dreams of our students become reality, that Congress can affect positive change.

I would like to leave you with four recommendations:

1. As the nation's demographics shift, an analysis should be conducted to ensure that TRIO funds are available to institutions that are early in the transition of serving minority and low income students. Guidelines should be broadened to encourage partnerships with other community organizations that are supporting the needs of similar populations.
2. Rather than keep TRIO programs separate from others within the institution, they should be integrated to ensure that the number of students served is not limited by Federal dollars. The approach currently taken has the impact of capping who is served. This cap could easily be removed by requiring integration with existing services.
3. Increasingly, the fastest growing HSI colleges are community colleges. As community colleges enroll over half of Hispanics in higher education, this designation helps them design successful strategies around student success and STEM. A continued emphasis should be placed on improving completion rates.
4. In addition, partnerships should be broadened to encourage the implementation of Early College High Schools as this approach has a proven record of improving

high school graduation rates, college readiness, reducing time to degree, improving GPAs, and improving college completion.

Because the largest-growing population in this nation is Latino AND because most HSIs are community colleges, which serve more than half of this nation's college-going Latinos, we believe that ensuring the support of these designated institutions helps our country achieve its goal to graduate more skilled individuals who can compete in the global marketplace and raise the living standards of their communities.

Thank for your time, your attention today, and your support for our students.