



Phase 2 Institutional PAIR Cohort Projects and Members – Spring 2023

The *EQUITABLE STUDENT PATHWAYS* Project

Data Agency, Action, and Insight: Redesigning Student Pathways to Ensure Equity
University of Texas System Lumina Foundation Grant

Project Overview

The UT System's *Equitable Student Pathways* Project is using the power of data to design new pathways that will help more students—especially historically excluded and minoritized populations in Texas—apply, matriculate, persist, progress, and complete quality degrees at UT System institutions.

Funded by Lumina Foundation, the initiative supports three interdependent projects focused on:

- Redesigning curricular pathways with a focus on innovative courses and credentials;
- Making equity-centered data, research, practice, and policy the default across UT System; and
- Using research and data analytics through visualizations and dashboards to resolve equity gaps for successful degree-completion and entry into the workforce.

In Phase 2 of the grant, five institutional PAIR cohorts are working to re-envision curricular structures and disciplinary boundaries through an equity lens and rigorous data analysis, using Participatory Action Institutional Research, an iterative change model that identifies units of analysis and performance and efficiency metrics across the student life cycle of matriculation, progression, completion, cost/debt, and post-collegiate outcomes.

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UT Arlington

Project

Improve the pass rates in introductory courses with enrollments totaling more than 2,200 per semester and high DFW rates to ensure students remain on the path to timely degree completion. The project will identify the supports and curricular designs needed to close equity gaps and improve student success outcomes for specified populations and in specified courses and majors, especially high-enrollment STEM programs. UTA has a Student Success Task Force underway, which is examining equity gaps and beginning to identify interventions to address them. This project's focus on curricular innovation will advance the work, all of which is aligned with UTA's strategic plan, Bold Solutions/Global Impact, which prioritizes student access and success.

Target Student Population/Equity Gap(s)

Data show equity gaps in retention and graduation for Black/African American and Hispanic students, as well as gaps for male and conditionally admitted students. The project will focus on students from these populations enrolled in gateway courses named below, who are majoring in Computer Science, Biology, Mechanical Engineering, Nursing and Accounting.

Data/Unit(s) of Analysis

Quantitative data including enrollment in intro courses, grades, and drops disaggregated across student populations, as well as qualitative data generated by the UTA Student Success Task Force, conversations with faculty and staff, and the APLU Powered by Publics project. Metrics include retention rates, DFW and drop rates, with a focus on key student populations: conditionally admitted, males, Pell-eligible, and Black/African American, Hispanic, and for some aspects of the project, White students.

Curricular Components

High-enrollment gateway courses with substantial drop and DFW rates, including *Intro to Computers and Programming*, *Chemistry for Engineers*, *General Chemistry*, *Human Anatomy and Physiology*, and *Principles of Accounting*.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

UT El Paso

Project

Improving time-to-degree and SCH-to-degree for transfer students, particularly those in Bachelor of Music (BM) degree programs. The review of student success data in this major reveal that students take longer to complete this program, especially students who are first-generation and low-income/Pell-eligible. The project will identify causes and barriers, and solutions to address them, and is tightly aligned with UTEP’s Title V Grant for preventing stop-outs and improving Hispanic student completion. The project will also create an opportunity to reengage partners at El Paso Community College to align degree pathways.

Target Student Population/Equity Gap(s)

UTEP is a majority-Hispanic serving institution, with more than 80% Hispanic and 94% from underserved minority populations. However, first-generation and low-income/Pell-eligible students take longer to complete and are more likely to stop out if their degree pathway is interrupted during their first or second years. In addition, most programs have high proportions (40-50%) of transfer students, however the BM program only includes 15% transfer students with even fewer who go on to graduate.

Data/Unit(s) of Analysis

Four main data sources and metrics have been and will continue to be used: time-to-degree and SCH-to-degree; graduation issues and complaints requiring resolution by Provost’s Office; degree flowcharts identifying course sequencing requirements; and the tools of the Curricular Analytics/Curriculum Complexity process being used as part of UTEP’s Title V Grant.

Curricular Component

The project will review all concentrations and key components of the BM program as well as the Bachelor of Commercial Music, including theory and aural skills training, to update curricular offerings and sequences. The work will also dovetail with the existing Curricular Analytics Project, sponsored by the Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities (EURU), to reduce pathway complexity without compromising program quality.

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UT Rio Grande Valley

Project

The purpose of this project is to re-imagine the Biology major to make it current, innovative, and responsive to student and workforce needs. It has been over a decade since the degree has been updated and the number of Biology majors have decreased significantly in the past two years. UTRGV's Biology majors have some of the lowest median income after graduation, and the department chair and college leadership are committed to a complete redesign of the major in order to modernize the curriculum to meet current and future market demands. Biology is already piloting a Google certificate program and working with UT System on incorporating micro-credentials into the curriculum, and the department's 5-year strategic plan (approved in 2021) includes curriculum revision as a goal.

Target Student Population/Equity Gap(s)

The Biology department is seeking to improve the number of our graduates that get a job in STEM fields that align with their personal professional goals after graduation, including getting a job matched to their degree in the RGV region, since many want to continue living in their home community after graduation. Almost all our Biology majors are Hispanic, and there is a known equity gap in retention and graduation rates for Hispanic males at the institution, which we also see in the Biology major.

Data/Unit(s) of Analysis

We will evaluate data on multi-year enrollment trends, retention rates, graduation rates, and workforce outcomes for Biology majors. We have gathered responses from a departmental survey of students in the Biology major, identifying their interests and desires for the degree. In addition, this group will need to source market research on what kinds of Biology programs being offered (in Texas or elsewhere), and ways to creatively embed micro-credentials to help meet workforce needs.

Curricular Component

The project will revise the curricular paths for Biology majors, focusing on the core Biological skills needed to succeed in the jobs of today and the future. This includes an emphasis on hands-on experiences, technological applications, and a streamlined curriculum that allows students to graduate in an affordable, timely fashion. This should include providing opportunities for micro-credentials and certificated that can be obtained for specializations relative to the job market that won't increase time to degree.

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UT San Antonio

Project

The first phase of the project identified several university-wide strategies designed to improve student degree attainment. In this phase, we would like to scale these identified strategies to support degree-attainment in larger majors and build a formalized program-equity scorecard. The proposed targeted programs are finance; accounting; and cyber and information systems in the Alvarez College of Business. These programs have significant gaps in persistence and degree attainment for underrepresented populations, female students, and transfer students. As well, the Alvarez College of Business currently has the largest population growth for Hispanic transfer students. This project continues the mission of our Equity Advocacy Initiative to foster healthy and inclusive learning environments.

Target Student Population/Equity Gap(s)

The Alvarez College of Business serves 6,163 undergraduate students and an additional 809 in their pre-major pathway. The College has a student population identifying as female of 2,353 (38%) and students identifying as URM of 4,265 (69%). Our specific gaps identified in this project are: 1) reducing the URM and female disparity of students in pre-major studies for finance, accounting, and cyber and information systems, 2) reducing the equity gaps in attempted versus earned hours in the selected majors, 3) assessing the equity gap in UTSA applications to admission to enrollment using these programs as exploratory majors, and 4) reducing equity gaps in transfer student persistence and graduation.

Data/Unit(s) of Analysis

Our phase one project has created a new program equity review that is currently addressing curriculum complexity, persistence, URM (race/ethnicity), and gender differences in studies versus major progression, time to degree, average hours attempted versus earned, and we are now building this into a college review system for real-time interventions. For Phase Two, we are selecting three majors that each present unique equity challenges that may be scaled for numerous majors at UTSA.

Curricular Component

Curricular complexity has been identified from the phase one project as a significant barrier, with national evidence supporting that HSI's often have higher degree complexity correlating with extended time to degree (UERU Curricular Complexity). We learned in Phase 1 that single or multi-course redesigns are insufficient as stand-alone fixes to address equity disparities when compared with system-wide restructuring. This phase two project is uniquely positioned to help us build a sustainable measure for equitable degree progress as departments begin complexity reduction projects for our 2024-26 catalog.

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UT Tyler

Project

UT Tyler’s emerging strategic plan has three main roadmaps for success: recruitment, retention, and increasing research expenditures. With our admitted cohorts over the past two years, approximately 30% of our incoming FTIC population are deemed “not college ready,” as defined by Texas’ TSI exam. We must provide the resources and curricular paths to enable all admitted students to become college ready.

Target Student Population/Equity Gap(s)

UT Tyler’s TSI-liable population has comprised over 30% of the incoming FTIC population for the past two years. As we continue to have sizeable incoming freshman cohorts and the challenges in K-12 learning being reported by the Texas Education Agency, we anticipate these numbers to continue to grow. When UT Tyler analyzed its TSI-liable student population, we consistently found students of color comprise over 60%. Significant percentages of our TSI-liable students are first-generation and Pell-eligible

Data/Unit(s) of Analysis

The data used to help us identify the problem includes the number of students needing to progress through developmental education opportunities, the percentage of these TSI-liable students who are not retained throughout or after their first semester at UT Tyler, and the breakdown of demographics and student categories (i.e., race, Pell-eligible, first-generation, etc.) of our TSI-liable student. Additional metrics include:

- % of our incoming FTIC cohort who are TSI-liable
- % of TSI-liable students who fall in categories of traditionally marginalized student groups
- % of TSI-liable students who are retained fall to spring and fall to fall

Curricular Component

The revised curricular pathways and newly developed academic resources will provide multiple options for students to gain the needed knowledge and skills for academic success and to be deemed college ready. Specifically, we will have pathways for mathematics, reading comprehension, writing, and other critical student success strategies such as belonging, implementing a growth mindset, and utilizing deep processing strategies for learning.

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