

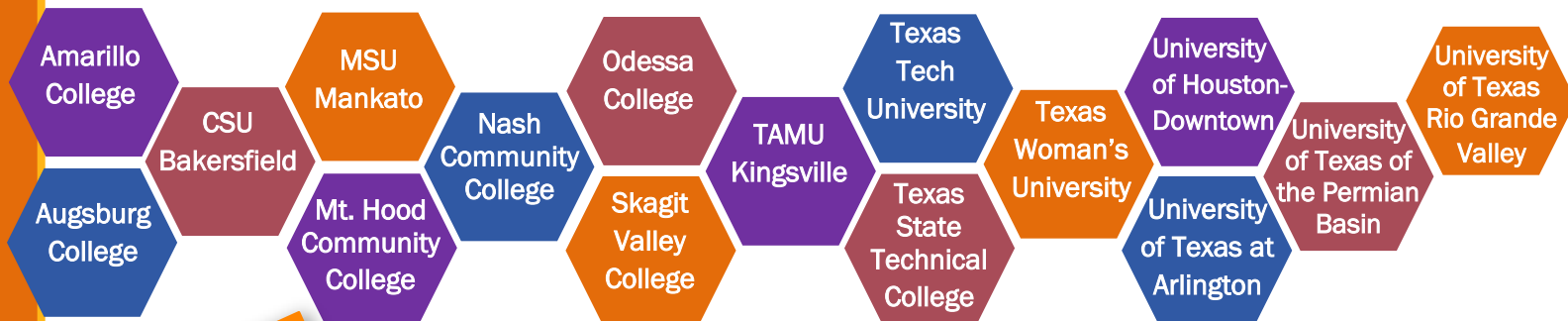
Staying the Course

At AVID for Higher Education (AHE), we often must confront “initiative fatigue”—faculty and administrators who are tired of being directed to stop what they are doing in order to initiate a new idea or strategy that will hopefully lead to success. After this happens two or three times in a short period, staff are both skeptical and unimpressed by the call to try today’s “new thing.”

Several of the institutions that began AHE during its formative years recognized this sentiment and tried to address it head on. As always, they were the staff members who were willing to try something new in the hopes that it would increase student success. Leaders at campuses such as **Texas A&M–Kingsville**, **Minnesota State University–Mankato**, **Nash Community College**, and **Odessa College** started their programs on a small scale but had campus plans for how AHE could undergird change across the campus. They introduced services and encouraged but did not require faculty to participate in professional development and other activities. They created teams with members from student and academic services and gained their support for a comprehensive campus plan. When new components were added, the AHE Liaisons reflected on how these initiatives supplemented but did not supplant existing services.

In other words, most AHE campuses stayed the course. Even as they added new components, the AHE comprehensive approach was maintained. The conviction they showed to “staying the course” has led to success. This issue of the AHE Newsletter focuses on two campuses that have been in the network for over five years. They now provide campus-wide services, including advising, mentoring and tutoring, first-year experience options for students, and ongoing professional learning workshops for faculty. **Minnesota State University–Mankato** began with the Teacher Preparation implementation and added the Student Success component in 2016. **Texas A&M–Kingsville** followed the opposite path, beginning with AHE Student Success and adding the Teacher Preparation component.

Campuses often are skeptical when AHE states that services grow slowly, but if you stick with the program, it will grow into a campus-wide commitment with a unified vision of student success. We are proud of those campuses that proved this point. We honor the following campuses that have been members of the AHE network five years or more:



Did you know?

The above sites represent 33% of the total AVID for Higher Education campuses for the 2016–2017 contract year. Next year, another 10 campuses will join this group of AHE sites in years five and beyond.

TAMUK Expands Professional Development

In 2010, **Texas A&M University–Kingsville (TAMUK)** became one of the first campuses to join AHE. From the beginning, they incorporated the services provided into their newly created Center for Student Success. The purpose of the center was, according to Stephanie Bain De Los Santos, AHE Liaison, “to build a circle of care for our students that creates a sense of community and family even if they are far from home or have no other support.” The Center would measure its progress by increases in the retention rate, which stood at 55% in 2011. Over time, **TAMUK** developed and refined all of the components of AHE, beginning with the Center itself, which serves as a gathering place for both students and faculty. They also created a two-semester first-year-experience course, began a vibrant peer tutoring/mentoring program, offered supplemental instruction, and centralized professional academic advising. These student services are enhanced by a common read program and an author lecture series.

But all of these components depend on the commitment and expertise of faculty who are dedicated to student success. The Center for Student Success also partners with the Center for Teaching Effectiveness to provide an ongoing professional development program that is required of new faculty but open to all. In 2016–17, the program enrolled an average of 36 tenured faculty members in its workshops. These sessions frequently are led by AHE consultants and staff who have built a collegial relationship with **TAMUK** faculty and administration. Upon completion of the training sequence, faculty members receive an AVID certificate for documentation in their annual report.

Stephanie Bain De Los Santos adds, “We are so excited to be able to offer this opportunity to our faculty and staff. At the end of the day it is the students that benefit from all of the hard work that we put in.” **TAMUK**’s faculty development series not only engages its faculty but also extends invitations to local school districts, inviting them to join the workshop sessions. These K–12 educators also receive a **TAMUK** AVID certificate that they can use as CTE hours towards their state professional development requirement. **TAMUK** also participates in the Teacher Preparation components of AHE and works with local districts to assure that they have new teachers who are ready to provide AVID high-impact practices at every grade level.

On the AHE Teacher Preparation side, the Center averages 80 attendees including faculty members, student teachers, and cooperating teachers from the local



Stephanie De Los Santos,
AHE Liaison/Common Read
Coordinator, TAMUK

districts. **TAMUK**’s Teacher Preparation partnered with Premont ISD in Premont, Texas. The district was in danger of closure when the accountability rating of Premont ISD for 2013 was Improvement Required; however, in 2014 it was Accredited–Warned, in 2015 it was Accredited–Probation, and in 2016 it met required standards. Since the implementation of AHE Teacher Preparation, the number of student teachers being offered jobs at the end of their student teaching has increased. In addition, the use of AVID strategies complements and provides evidence of student engagement for the newly adopted TAP© teacher evaluation rubric used to evaluate field and student teachers. The modeling of AVID strategies embedded within **TAMUK**’s education classes as a means to teach course content helps education students realize the potential of the AVID strategies as invaluable resources for their future classrooms.

Student success programs as extensive and comprehensive as **TAMUK**’s are not successful by chance. The campus has been fortunate to have leadership support and continuity from the beginning. Dr. Nancy KingSanders, Associate Vice President for Student Success, has overseen the development of AHE, serving as its campus liaison since 2011. She continues to work with a team that manages the Center for Student Success. **TAMUK** also relies on AHE coaching to provide both advice and support and to provide the faculty development workshops that serve as the foundation of **TAMUK**’s comprehensive student success program.

Experience and commitment make a difference at **TAMUK** and have led to success. In 2016, the university’s First Time in College retention rate is 71%, marking an increase of 17% since the Center’s opening just six years ago. According to Nancy KingSanders, “AVID for Higher Education has provided the foundation for students to be successful in their first year through graduation, as all mentors, tutors, first-year seminar faculty, and many other faculty use AVID high-impact strategies to ensure that students feel *(continued on page 3)*

(continued from page 2) empowered to learn.” For more information on the Center for Student Success at TAMUK, please contact:

- Christina Rodriguez-Gonzales, Director of GPS Mentoring & PAAC Tutoring Centers, at christina.rodriguez-gonzalez@tamuk.edu
- Jeanine Birdwell, Lecturer/Assistant Director of Mentoring & Tutoring, at barbara.birdwell@tamuk.edu
- Bret Vanness, First-Year Seminar Coordinator, at bret.vanness@tamuk.edu
- Stephanie Bain De Los Santos, AHE Liaison/Common Read Coordinator, at stephanie.delossantos@tamuk.edu

Teacher Prep At MSU–Mankato Supports Local Districts

“Prepare professionals who embrace big ideas and real-world thinking to ensure student success”

(<http://ed.mnsu.edu/about/framework.html>)

True to their mission statement, **Minnesota State University–Mankato** and its partner school districts have built, refined, and reflected upon their work as they’ve moved into their sixth year of AVID for Higher Education implementation. This partnership with AHE’s Teacher Preparation implementation is allowing the University’s College of Education and their partner K–12 school districts to move beyond a *partnership* to a true system for teacher preparation and student learning. They have used the AVID Socratic Tutorial as a system within a system to explore ways that they are linked together. Andy Krause from Mankato East High School and Laura Bemel, Director of the Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support at **Minnesota State University–Mankato**, have worked successfully together to develop a model utilizing AVID. Laura has noted several intricate components that have truly and systematically worked together to enact changes in how AVID has been leveraged to make a difference for students, both at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Based on the following principles, the partnership between the university and the school districts has been enhanced.

1. **The parts of the system work together for a common purpose.** *Our teacher candidates are studying learning theory and best practices for teaching students. They get to have wonderful field experiences as tutors in the AVID classrooms, where they are constantly using their AVID strategies to better understand student thinking and to create helpful questions for kids. The AVID teachers observe the university students during their tutorials and provide feedback and pose questions that prompt these future teachers to think about their AVID students and their own teaching practice. We’re seeing success for students and for AVID tutors.*
2. **The system functions best when all the parts are in the right place.** *We realized that our basic triad of tutor-student-teacher is essential, but we haven’t always connected the other parts of the system so they can contribute or see the benefit. Now our university faculty are modeling and using more AVID strategies earlier in their Education courses, and they are visiting AVID tutorial sites. We are proud that our numbers of tutors are growing and that faculty are asking about what’s going on.*
3. **When one part of the system changes, the other parts might need to adapt to keep functioning.** *As our teacher candidates get better at asking questions and eliciting student thinking because of their work as AVID tutors, faculty members are noticing this improvement in their university courses. Faculty have come to expect higher-level questioning from these teacher candidates in their other fieldwork. Faculty are asking questions about what students are learning because of the AVID experience. While it’s ideal to have all parts working optimally, the system still works if some of the parts become inactive or fail.*

Most recently, both Laura and Andy co-presented at AVID’s National Conference in December 2016. In their session, “Better Together! How K–12 and University AVID Benefit from a Systems Approach,” they highlighted the work that they are doing with AVID tutors in the school districts who are also teacher candidates at Minnesota State. Both enthusiastically shared how their work is engaging not only for K–12 students and the teacher candidates but also for them as reflective practitioners, in order to determine if the system is working and to consider how this system will advance student success for young learners and for adult learners who want to become teachers. In turn, this informs cycles of continuous improvement for this innovative system of connecting an institution of higher education and K–12 schools.

Article written by Laura Bemel and Rachel Juarez-Torres

NCC's Commitment Yields Results

Nash Community College (NCC) in Rocky Mt., North Carolina is another example of how AHE colleges that have stayed the course are realizing continued success. Associate Vice President of Curriculum and Chief Program Officer Mike Latham reported the following data in February 2017.

“AVID for Higher Education has been a vital part of the success of **Nash Community College** and its students. Since beginning our partnership with AVID for Higher Education in Fall 2012, Nash Community College has, like the North Carolina Community College System as a whole, experienced a precipitous decline in new enrollments. In the particular case of **Nash Community College**, the decline in new enrollments during the period has ranged from 10 to 25 percent per semester. However, unlike almost all the other Colleges in the NC system over that time frame, Nash CC has seen its student headcount and FTE either grow or at least remain flat. This has been due to increased retention of students, in which AVID strategies in classroom pedagogy played a predominant role. This has meant hundreds of thousands of dollars in budget funding for Nash Community College. More importantly for our students, over the same period we've seen increases in our number of graduates. During the time we've implemented AVID strategies and their spread across the campus, the following has occurred:

Spring 2013 graduation up 5%;
Spring 2014 graduation up 4%;

Spring 2015 graduation up 15%;
Spring 2016 graduation up 14%.

We are trending towards another major increase this Spring (2017). While we have instituted a variety of initiatives that have contributed to this, the common factor in all of them has been AVID. Thus, the College's association with AVID for Higher Education has been one of the best investments the College has ever made.”



President Gregory Williams of **Odessa College** in Odessa, Texas used the discipline and techniques found in AVID for Higher Education in pursuing his vision to become the best student-focused community college in the nation. Located in West Texas, **Odessa College** serves a diverse region that historically has had low levels of educational attainment. Despite its isolation and challenging economic environment, **Odessa College** has developed a culture in which student outcomes—notably, completion and preparation for good, available jobs—drive important decisions, from hiring faculty and staff to crafting professional development opportunities and setting budget priorities. This student-centered approach is reflected in an aggressive reform agenda including changes in the core academic schedule and an overhaul in advising practices.

Odessa College was named one of the Top Ten National Finalists for the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence and went on to become one of just two Rising Star Finalists from among that Top Ten. One impressive outcome recognized by The Aspen Institute is the dramatic increase in graduation/transfer rates—from 15% to 32% over a five-year period. OC was also commended for the fact that five years after graduating, on average, **Odessa College** students earn more than double the wages of all other workers in the region. AHE is very proud to be a collaborating partner with **Odessa College**. Dr. Don Wood, **Odessa College**'s Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, said, “AVID is a central part of our student's achievements, and on behalf of OC we look forward to even more student success in the future.”

The college partnered with AHE and implemented AHE campus-wide in 2012. In 2013, **Odessa College** piloted AHE's career/technical course workshops that are now shared with other AHE *(continued on page 5)*

(Continued from page 4) community colleges across the nation. In 2016, **Odessa College** was recognized as AHE's first National Demonstration College. They have been a leader in what it means to be "all in" when it comes to student success. Campus leaders Dr. Kimberly McKay, Vice President for Student Success; Dr. Diane Carrasco, Dean of Teaching and Learning; and Katie Nisbet, Associate Dean of Arts & Sciences, have partnered with AHE to share their journey at many colleges and conferences.

AHE's Annual Liaison Meetings: A Must-Attend Event

In February, AHE held three AHE Liaisons meetings—one for Teacher Preparation network campuses at the AHE Dallas Office Training Room and two for Student Success

campuses—one hosted by **Odessa College** (TX) and the other hosted by **Nash Community College** (NC). In all, over 40 people from 26 programs attended the meetings.

Liaisons meetings are an important part of the administrative support offered to AHE campuses. Regardless of the number of meeting sites, the agendas are similar to ensure that you receive critical information. Typically, AHE staff provide updates regarding program resources and share an overview of data and evaluation results collected since the last meeting. This year, the hosting campuses highlighted their AHE implementation, and another AHE campuses provided an in-depth review of successes they have implemented. **Odessa College** opened with a presentation from their President, Dr. Greg Williams, about disrupting systems and processes that hinder student success. Kristi Clemmer and Denise Frohlich, **Odessa College's** AHE Liaisons, presented the participants with challenging questions that OC had to address along



AHE Liaisons at the Nash Student Success (above) and AVID Center Dallas Teacher Preparation (below) 2017 Liaison Meetings.



their path to increasing student success and access to careers. At the Odessa Liaisons meeting, Stephanie De Los Santos of **Texas A&M-Kingsville** provided an overview of its Center for Student Success, which has enriched its offerings each year since it was created in 2011. Also, Trisha Jenkins from **Saddleback College** (CA) shared their Excellence in Teaching Program, highlighting how they are recognizing faculty with an AHE Completion document after completion of a series of AHE high-engagement faculty development sessions. This work has increased student retention and success, as indicated in their MSDF Year 2 grant results. **Nash CC** highlighted its campus implementation—including its Math Lab and how they coordinate with their Early College High School, which is on their campus—not just to AHE liaisons but also to nearby North Carolina colleges and local school districts. Joseph Shields from Gibson Consulting shared the MSDF Year 2 Report. Changes in the AHE data collection document were discussed and input gathered for the final revision that will be discussed in the AHE Liaisons strand at the 2017 AVID Summer Institute in San Antonio.

The Teacher Preparation Liaisons meeting highlighted the work that **University of Texas of the Permian Basin** College of Education is doing with local schools. A webinar with Amy Anderson, Principal of Hays Elementary School (Ector County ISD), shared how the faculty and students have benefited from the collaboration. The question and answer session mined the relationships and

outcomes that have increased student teacher successes. Teacher Preparation liaisons delved into why "grit and empathy" are critical elements in creating a culture of innovation. The participants then collaborated to form plans for each campus to move forward in implementing innovative practices within their teacher preparation programs.

Finally, liaisons networked with one another, addressing challenges and successes they have experienced this year. Sharing with colleagues who have the same professional interests offers the chance to get "on the ground" and up-to-date information.

Make sure you plan to attend the next liaisons meeting in February 2018.



UTRGV AVID Teacher Prep



Since 2005, Excelencia, an organization dedicated to increasing success for Latino students, has selected college and university programs that it believes to be models of well-researched and well-implemented services that address its mission. In 2016, Excelencia recognized the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley as a model Hispanic-Serving Institution and added it to the Examples of Excelencia's Growing What Works list of successful campuses. The AHE Teacher Preparation program was implemented at The **University of Texas—Pan American** (now UT Rio Grande Valley) in 2012. AHE Teacher Preparation at **UTRGV** has been infused with the institution's UTeach program, which prepares and certifies math and science majors for the field of secondary education. **UTRGV** was recognized for their excellent work with Hispanic students.

Some evidence of effectiveness includes numbers of students, instructors, and mentor teachers trained; exam results; and career placement. A total of 373 students are currently enrolled in the UTeach/AVID Teacher Preparation program, and 98% of them are Hispanic. Since 2015, AVID Teacher Preparation instructional strategies were taught to 18 university faculty, 60 local school district mentor teachers, and over 300 UTeach students. There have been 60 graduates to date, 97% of whom are Latino, and 100% of graduates have passed both teacher certification exams required by the state of Texas. Also, 86% of AVID Teacher Prep graduates are currently employed by school districts, most of which are at a school district in the Rio Grande Valley. There is a greater than 80% retention rate from the beginning of the program to graduation.

According to Dr. Karen Watt, "AVID for Higher Education's Teacher Preparation pairs perfectly with the UTeach program at **UTRGV**. Since UTeach students begin their teaching experiences in their first year of college, AHE strategies that are taught in each class serve to support students in the field from the very beginning of their program. The strategies are especially important for the UTeach students (math and science majors) who are not exposed to as many pedagogy classes as are the traditional teacher preparation students. Instructors, students, and mentor teachers engage in AVID professional development to enhance UTeach student experiences."

AHE congratulates **UTRGV** for the recognition it received for its hard work and dedication to student success. The Growing What Works website that includes the entire **UTRGV** AVID Teacher Preparation story is <http://www.utrgv.edu/cos/programs/uteach/index.htm>.

SAVE THE DATES!

- **May 1:** Early Bird Deadline for Summer Institute (SI) Registrations. Register or turn in your site's contract request by the end of day May 1st to receive the discounted Early Bird Registration rate for SI.



- **July 12–14: San Antonio Summer Institute.** Teams should arrive on July 11th. Log into your MyAVID account (my.avid.org) for more information and to register.
- **December 7–9:** AVID's 2017 National Conference will be held in Orlando, FL.

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