



# *Promoting College Access and Success Through Innovative Partnerships*

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# *Purpose*

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Dual credit and the early college movement have fundamentally changed the typical student trajectory into postsecondary education. In Texas, roughly 200,000 students participate in dual credit annually (THECB, n.d.).

As this population continues to grow, it is incumbent upon educational leaders to reimagine systems, processes, and partnerships to better support students through the educational pipeline.

This session will engage participants in a conversation that focuses on one such example of innovative thinking that has supported student access and completion.

# *Presenter Positionality (Creswell, 2013)*

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## Michael E. Aldape

- Higher education professional with almost 12 years in enrollment management, student affairs, and student success.
- Work for 10 of the 12 years has included dual credit and ECHS programming.
- K-12 background; soon to complete an Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership.

## Jose G. Arambul, Jr.

- Master of Science in Academic Advising
- Over 15 years of higher education experience working with a variety of student populations across sectors including migrant students, dual credit, and ECHS.

## Shared Positionality

- First generation college graduates.
- Practitioner scholars who pursue data informed programming.
- Shared experiences living and working in the Rio Grande Valley.
- Strong commitment to increasing access and deconstructing barriers to postsecondary matriculation.

# *Level Setting*

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- Texas Southmost College and The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley share not only an institutional mission to support student success, but also operate shared services including Libraries, Recreation Centers, Performing Arts facilities, and even an ECHS.
- Both institutions offer dual credit programs in unique formats, and both institutions believe in being responsive to partners in this arena.

# *Focus of Today's Presentation*

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TSC and UTRGV work alongside one another in support of students in the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD).

Quick Facts About BISD:

- Largest school district in the region with over 40,000 students enrolled in K-12 (TEA, 2021)
- Enrolls 98% Hispanic students; 89.2% economically disadvantaged; 35% English Learners (TEA, 2021)
- Largest partner in the TSC service area
- Seven designated ECHS (one stand-alone and 6 school-within-a-school)
- Strong focus on providing students with academic choice and options

# *Programming*

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- True partnership between three entities focused on being responsive and proactive as opposed to reactive to situations.
- The three partners come together monthly for multiple opportunities to share data, plan for the upcoming semesters, and troubleshoot barriers that would impede student opportunity.
- Monthly Cabinet/Administrator/Counselor Meetings

# *Districtwide ECHS Initiative*

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- BISD opened its first ECHS in 2008 (BECHS) and opted to become an ECHS district in 2013. At that time, the focus was increasing access to postsecondary education for the district's students.
- Establishing ECHS programs in the district was step-one; maintaining and growing the initiative required on-going coordination among partners.
- District has seen significant increases in the participation in dual credit since 2014.
- With access addressed, the district shifted focus to completion initiatives.

# *Brownsville ECHS*

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- Established in 2008, this stand-alone ECHS partners with both TSC and UTRGV.
- Prior to 2018, students at BECHS took UTRGV courses almost exclusively.
- In Fall 2018, the new campus principal engaged partners at both IHE's to consider options for associate degree completion.
- BECHS students begin taking dual credit in 9<sup>th</sup> grade with TSC and may earn up to 18 core credits by the end of sophomore year. Students transition to UTRGV courses in junior year and may earn up to 54 credits.
- Seamless sharing of transcripts between institutions.



# *Ongoing Student Support*

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- Group Academic Advising Sessions
- Individualized Appointments
- Transfer Advising for Students with Dual Credit (focus on helping students who earn AA degrees understand their postsecondary options)
- Early new student orientation for students with dual credit.
- Working towards incorporating holistic peer mentoring for students in dual credit.