College credit in high school? It's possible at UTB/TSC

By Beatriz Valle
Staff Writer

Sixteen-year-old Isa Salazar wants to be a physical education coach or a cosmetologist after she graduates from Rivera High School.

"It's a good idea to know what you want to do," Isa said.

Alicia Salazar is concerned about her daughter's schooling.

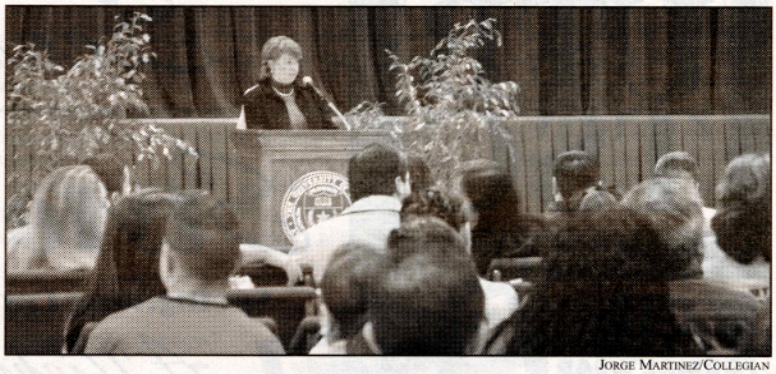
"I want the best education for my daughter," she said.

Mother and daughter were two of about 500 Rio Grande Valley parents and students who were introduced to the Dual Enrollment program March 23 in the Jacob Brown Auditorium.

Dual Enrollment allows high school students to earn college or vocational credit toward a postsecondary certificate or degree at UTB/TSC, which will also count as credit toward a high school diploma.

"I think it's a great opportunity for our Valley high school kids," said Sasha Parris, Dual Enrollment adviser at UTB/TSC. "For a lot of students who don't [think they] have the opportunity to go to college, it is a bit of encouragement [for] them to continue on with their studies."

Linda Fossen, associate vice president for Enrollment Planning, said the program positively impacts students' GPAs.



JORGE MARTINEZ/COLLEGIAN

Linda Fossen, associate vice president for Enrollment Planning, speaks to high school students about the Dual Enrollment Program March 23 in the Jacob Brown Auditorium.

"We have done a study of the students that take dual credit in high school. As a group, [they] have higher GPAs than students who come to us without taking dual credit first," Fossen said.

Students may become eligible for the program based on their TAKS scores, or as alternatives they must pass the THEA, ASSET, ACCUPLACER, SAT or ACT exams. Students enrolled in technical courses as part of a Level I Certificate Program at UTB/TSC are temporarily waived from testing requirements.

Tuition is waived for students admitted into Dual Enrollment. However, there is a $5 fee for each credit hour taken. The Brownsville School District pays this fee for its students.

"All we need is for them to fill out a dual enrollment application along with the parent/guardian signature and a copy of their transcript," UTB/TSC Admissions Director Rene Villarreal said. "As long as they are declared college-ready based on their TSI or their TAKS scores in high school, they will qualify. [Students] have until the first day of class, Aug. 25 for Fall of 2005, [to sign up]."

The Texas Success Initiative, or TSI, is a state law identifies students as college

Please see 'Dual,' Page 9

Dual

Continued from page 7

ready, Villarreal explained.

Villarreal also said that in past years the university has offered the program for juniors and seniors only, but is expanding it to include freshmen and sophomores.

About 900 students are currently enrolled in the program.

"Dual enrollment has tripled this year [compared] to last year," Fossen said. "We feel that this is a great advantage for students in high school and for our community. We really do believe students that take dual credits are more likely to succeed in college."

Benifits for students include the discounted tuition, starting college while attending high school, earning college credits that are transferable to other universities/colleges and saving time pursuing their academic careers, according to an information sheet provided at the event.

Evanette Vega, 16 and a sophomore at Pace High School, said she heard about the program from her 10th-grade counselor.

"She said I should plan ahead and get my career faster," Evanette said. "I'm glad that UTB is getting involved with the community, especially with the high school students."