Draft Proposal
Gary L. Lee
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LEADERSHIP LADDER PROGRAM

TEXAS A&M-KINGSVILLE

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LEADERSHIP LADDER PROGRAM

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROJECT:

The Leadership Ladder Program is aimed at improving the academic and career development success rate for all Texas A&M-Kingsville students through a unique student-to-student process. The overall goal is to assist the university in its often difficult mission of improving student achievement and retention, offering leadership experience, and increasing the number of graduates particularly in the areas of science, engineering, math, and agriculture. Thus, the objective is to have students proceed "up the leadership ladder" as they move from a freshman receiving assistance to an upper classman providing counseling and mentoring to new freshman students. The LLP is either responsible for or plays a major role in the following activities: (1) peer mentoring and counseling (2) academic rescue programs, (3)" Hoggie Days" Orientation programs, (4) high school senior day programs, (5) South Texas Leadership Conferences.

A NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Texas A&M-Kingsville established the Leadership Ladder Program (LLP) in January, 1991. In a period of just three years, the LLP developed into a program of excellence in South Texas. The LLP is recognized as a model program within the university and throughout secondary schools and junior colleges in South Texas. The LLP continues to improve the academic and career development success rate for Texas A&M - Kingsville students. The LLP is an innovative approach in providing what education researchers refer to as "cross generational" support through peer interventions by students who have successfully completed different levels of academic work. The overall goal is to improve student achievement, offer leadership experiences, and increase graduates, particularly in the areas of science, engineering, math, agriculture and human sciences. The LLP is a key element within all freshman students' first year experience at the university.

While Texas A&M-Kingsville has always had many outstanding programs, the overall success rate of graduating students needs to be improved. Minority students, predominantly Hispanic, comprise more than 60% of the enrollment at the university. Traditional programs often fall short in both attracting students and

retaining significant numbers of students through graduation.

Texas A&M-Kingsville introduced College I in September, 1989 in a major effort to improve student academic performance, retention, and career development. College I is an innovative program aimed at providing more person to person academic support and counseling to improve student success. College I is best described as a freshman college and represents a direct commitment to freshman students and their parents. State assistance provides limited and inadequate funding of what is needed to administer College I. Specifically, state funding does not provide for applied leadership stipends for outstanding university students. The LLP has proven to be a key element in the successful College I program and needs to be continued.

The LLP is at the heart of the university's mission and enables the university, for the first time, to administer an outstanding peer mentoring and leadership program that involves currently successful students as well as all new students attending the university. Thus, the beneficiaries of the program are both the LLP students who learn leadership skills and provide service, and all freshman students who receive peer advising, counseling, and mentoring throughout their first year of college.

PROGRAM PROCEDURES

1. Twenty-one students will be selected to receive leadership training and provide services in the program. A committee comprised of the Dean of College I, coordinator of the LLP, senior LLP members, and other College I staff administers the selection process to assure that the student leaders have the ability and leadership potential to significantly contribute to the goals of the program. University faculty nominate outstanding students who are then selected based upon the following criteria: (a) demonstrated academic success, (b) ability to communicate, (c) ability to establish rapport and develop empathy with others, and (d) interest in serving and contributing to a unique student-to-student program.

2. Students selected will participate in the program as peer leaders and mentors for freshman students and provide the academic support, encouragement and assistance to new students attending the university. LLP students are assigned specific responsibilities and work as student professionals with College I staff. They receive leadership stipends in increasing amounts as they move up the leadership

ladder and assume added responsibilities. They also participate in bi-weekly meetings for leadership development, planning, and coordination of assignments. The leadership training aspect of the program is designed to identify and teach essential leadership skills maximizing opportunities for future leadership positions. The service aspect of the program is an applied work experience connecting them directly with new freshman students attending the university. The value of the LLP is two-fold: (a) maximizing the leadership potential of currently successful students at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Twenty-one students will receive the benefits of this leadership development process); and (b) involving successful students as role models/counselors and as peer mentors/leaders to provide academic and counseling support to the 1,000 + new freshman students each year.

3. All LLP students are assigned an applied leadership experience working directly with new freshman students. Each assignment is in one of the major program elements of College I. This applied leadership experience is for a minimum of 10 hours per week. Some LLP students will also serve during the summer semesters. Each student leader in the program receives periodic evaluation and coaching

to enhance leadership development.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

The Leadership Ladder Program is responsible for several major programs. Each LLP student is directly involved in one or more of the following programs designed to promote student success:

1. The Academic Rescue Program (ARP) is an early academic warning and intervention process involving faculty and freshman students. Faculty members identify and refer students in their classes who are experiencing difficulty to the ARP via the ARP hotline or an ARP referral card. The LLP is responsible for contacting, consulting, connecting the student with academic support programs, and providing a follow-up for the faculty.

2. The South Texas Leadership Conference is an annual event created by the LLP for high school student leaders representing school districts in South Texas. The weekend event features a keynote address, fast-paced leadership workshops, and group leadership case studies which focus on real life issues affecting

schools, communities, and families. As a direct result of the conference, several schools have initiated programs in their communities to alleviate the negative effects of these issues. Three Annual South Texas Leadership Conferences have been organized and convened on the campus of Texas A&M - Kingsville.

3. The College I Newsletter, implemented to improve communications with the university community and various schools, is published by LLP students working with the Dean of College I. By using the latest technological computer programs, the LLP members organize, format, and publish the newsletter in a professional manner.

4. The "Hoggie Days" Orientation Program is a required new program for freshman students and their parents. The LLP totally revamped the program by adding an informative and entertaining performance dubbed the "Hoggie Show." The "Hoggie Show" is a creative spoof of the "Tonight Show" and features a monologue, guest interviews, skits, commercials, live music, and audience participation. The LLP members are credited with creating, directing, and presenting the "Hoggie Show."

THE GOALS OF THE LEADERSHIP LADDER PROGRAM

As a direct result of its success for three years, the goals of the LLP are now very precise. All of the goals reflect the ongoing efforts of the LLP. Current goals include:

Goal 1: Working with new freshman students as peer mentors and counselors.

LLP students have doubled (a 100% increase) the amount of personal attention given to new freshman students. Since 1991, over 3,000 new freshman students participated in academic advisement conferences. The LLP was the major factor in adding peer advising for new students.

Goal 2: Presenting the "Hoggie Days" program.

The LLP is primarily responsible for the entertaining, informative, and highly successful "Hoggie Days" programs for new freshman students and parents. Since 1991 over 3,000 new students and 1200 parents attended one of several "Hoggie Days" programs.

Goal 3: Directing the Academic Rescue Program.

LLP students are totally responsible for the Academic Rescue Program (ARP). Since 1991, over 2,000 students received the benefits of the ARP. Over 70% of the students referred resulted in successful outcomes. In addition, LLP students initiated a new academic rescue program for freshman students who were placed on scholastic probation. In one year, this program resulted in a decrease of 13% of students who ended up on an enforced withdrawal status. Over 90% of students contacted and counseled by LLP students were able to successfully remove themselves from academic jeopardy.

Goal 4: Publishing the College I Newsletter.

Working directly with the Dean of College I, LLP students organize, format, and publish a professional looking newsletter to keep the university community informed as to College I events.

Goal 5: Convening the South Texas Leadership Conference.

The LLP planned, organized, and convened the very first South Texas Leadership Conference in 1991 and has

attracted over 450 student leaders from 30 school districts throughout South Texas. Three annual conferences have been convened on the campus of Texas A&M-Kingsville.

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

1. Identify and enhance the leadership potential of students by providing for the participation of twenty-one successful students (undergraduate and graduate) to develop leadership abilities through applied experience and to serve as role models to new students.

2. Assist the university in its central but often difficult mission of improving student achievement, retention, and graduation.

3. Expand leadership development and service to the university, school districts, and communities in South Texas.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION:

Texas A&M University-Kingsville had its origin in the teacher college movement that swept Texas in the early 1900s. Its inception in 1925 was a South Texas

Teachers College while expansion of the University's role is reflected in the change of its name to Texas College of Arts and Industries in 1929 and to Texas A&I University in 1967. The University became the nucleus of the Texas A&I University System of South Texas in 1972, and on September 1 1989, Texas A&I merged with the Texas A&M system, creating Texas A&M-Kingsville. College I was created in 1989 to meet the wide ranging needs of the student body, sixty percent of whom are Hispanic. Texas A&M-Kingsville is the most comprehensive and only predominately residential university south of the line from Houston to San Antonio to El Paso. Academic programs in engineering, agriculture, human sciences, adult education, and its freshman college (College I) are unique to the region.

For a number of reasons Texas A&M-Kingsville is uniquely qualified to plan, develop, and implement a successful student leadership development program. The structure of its College I program encourages and supports innovation. As a direct result of College I, the initial experimental LLP program was created and tested for a four year period. The LLP is now widely recognized as an exemplary leadership development and service model to students, schools, communities, and families throughout South Texas. This program is credited with helping to reverse the alarming dropout

rate of freshman students, being one of the most cost effective programs ever developed at Texas A&M-Kingsville, and serving as an inspiration to thousands of young people in South Texas.

In addition to its proven success in South Texas, the LLP has been recognized and selected for two prestigious awards. The first was The 1992 Retention Excellence Award from the Noel/Levitz Centers for Innovation and Institutional Effectiveness. The second was being selected as a 1992 Star of Texas award winner in the Lone Star Salute to Community Service by the National Commission on Community Service. These awards were based on innovation, commitment, and proven results. The LLP was also cited for being a part of the solution to the nation's critical social and educational problems.

The same leadership and management expertise that helped build the experimental leadership development program into a nationally award winning program will be utilized in this project. Dr. Gary Low, who created the initial program, and Mr. Rito Silva, who planned and coordinated the LLP since its inception will manage the program and provide leadership direction for LLP students and projects.

BUDGET REQUEST

Texas A&M University-Kingsville is requesting an extension and expansion of the Leadership Ladder Program for an additional three years. An annual budget of $50,000 is requested to build upon the extraordinary success of the LLP and to continue studying its value to university students, secondary schools, and communities in South Texas.

LLP BUDGET REQUEST

Student Leadership Stipends:

6 sophomore students @ $500 per semester.....	$ 6,000
6 junior students @ $600 per semester.....	$ 7,200
6 senior students @ $1000 per semester.....	$12,000
2 graduate students @ $1200 per semester.....	$ 4,800
1 LLP student coordinator @ $1500 per semester.	$ 3,000
	$33,000

Summer Stipends.....	$ 6,000	
Leadership Training and Development	$ 5,000	
Supplies and Materials...	$ 3,000	
Travel to schools and leadership conferences..	$ 3,000	$17,000
	ANNUAL TOTAL	**$50,000**