EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RGV LEAD's 2014 Regional Data Report

RIO GRANDE VALLEY LEAD

LINKING ECONOMIC & ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the business of education

MISSION STATEMENT

Partnering to engage students in college-and-career-focused learning opportunities to achieve a higher level of competence in the workforce.

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Executive Summary of RGV LEAD's 2014 Regional Data Report

INTRODUCTION

Rio Grande Valley Linking Economic and Academic Development (RGV LEAD) has provided stakeholders with data reports annually for over 20 years. Annual reports have included a regional report of participation in RGV LEAD's programs, student data comparing outcomes for tech prep students and non-tech prep students, and individual reports for school district partners. All reports through the year 2013 utilized data provided to RGV LEAD by the state and data collected locally by RGV LEAD. State reports delivered to RGV LEAD were provided by a THECB contractor who utilized data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

In 2012, THECB stopped providing data reports to RGV LEAD. RGV LEAD is committed to accountability and to providing the RGV LEAD board of directors and stakeholders with feedback based on student outcomes. These outcomes track students participating in area tech prep and related college-and-career-focused programs of study as they reach critical milestones in their educational careers. When THECB stopped providing RGV LEAD with data, RGV LEAD entered into a contract with the Texas Education Research Center at The University of Texas at Austin (Texas ERC) in order to continue providing regional and district-level reports. This 2014 regional report RGV LEAD's first report utilizing data from the Texas ERC, which utilized data from TEA, THECB, and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) in providing data to RGV LEAD. The reports provided by the Texas ERC cover the period of 2008-2009 through 2011-2012.

The 2014 Regional Data Report highlights the Valley's success story in education and the positive impact of participation in tech prep and related college-and-career-focused programs of study. The regional report also points to regional challenges that continue to persist despite past and continuing efforts.

The main findings of the 2014 Regional Data Report are summarized as follows:

- Rio Grande Valley students were more likely than the state to graduate under the most rigorous high school graduation plan available… about 22% compared to 12% for the state of Texas.

- Valley students had higher college/university enrollment rates than the state – a three-year average (2009, 2010 and 2011) of 60% for the Valley compared to 55% for the state of Texas.

- The annual high school dropout rate for the Valley is very similar to that of the state…2.5% for the Valley compared to 2.1% for the state.

- Valley students who participated in tech prep and related college-and-career-focused programs of study had better outcomes in high school and higher education than their non-participating counterparts. (The same is not necessarily true for the state as a whole.)

- Rio Grande Valley students who graduated from high school in 2009 were only slightly less likely than the state as a whole to have attained a post-secondary credential or degree by the end of 2013: 10% for the Valley and 11% for the state.

- The percentage of Valley students who did not meet Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standards was greater than that of the state as a whole: 39% for the Valley compared with 31% for the state. (TSI includes college-readiness standards for mathematics, reading, and writing. TSI proficiency must be demonstrated at the point of initial enrollment in higher education, and students who do not meet the standards and seek to earn college degrees are required to enroll in developmental, or remedial, education in college.)

- Many students, both Valley and statewide, who did not meet TSI standards did not enroll in any developmental coursework in their first term in higher education.

- Mean salaries for Valley students who entered the workforce right after high school graduation or those who are both working and enrolled in higher education tend to be lower than those of the state overall.

ABOUT RGV LEAD

RGV LEAD is a nonprofit, community-based organization that has operated regionally in Texas' Rio Grande Valley (Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties) for over 20 years. RGV LEAD is a regional intermediary organization that contributes to the Valley's economic development by working through cross-sector partnerships of school districts, colleges and universities, businesses, and governmental entities. RGV LEAD brings the partners together and facilitates collaborative projects linking labor market trends with education programs. Collaborative projects are designed to help students acquire the academic and career skill sets necessary for success in higher education, careers, and life. The college-and-career-focused programs of study that RGV LEAD promotes blend college-preparatory academics with workforce-related skills. All RGV LEAD projects are designed to support student development that will lead to a higher level of readiness for success in post-secondary education, workforce, and community. RGV LEAD's projects are also directly supportive of the strategic plan adopted by the RGV LEAD board of directors in August 2012, when the organization changed its name from Tech Prep of the Rio Grande Valley to Rio Grande Valley Linking Economic and Academic Development. RGV LEAD's 2012 strategic plan incorporated these elements:

- Motto (In the Business of Education),

- Core Values (Leadership, Collaboration, Integrity, Excellence, and Accountability),

- Vision Statement (RGV LEAD builds the intellectual capital of the region by facilitating collaboration between employers, community leaders, and educators from public schools colleges and universities to assist students in acquiring the public schools, colleges, and universities to assist students in acquiring the academic and career skill-sets necessary for success in higher education, careers, and life.) and

- Mission Statement (Partnering to engage students in college-and-career-focused learning opportunities to achieve a higher level of competence in the workforce.)

RGV LEAD's strategic plan identifies the critical regional challenges RGV LEAD and its partners are working to address (some of which continue to exist today), as follows:

1. There is a shortage of high school and college graduates in the region.

2. There is an ongoing need to help students improve critical-thinking skills, increase communication skills and develop the technical skills and increase communication skills and develop the technical skills and workplace ethics demanded in today's evolving high-tech workplace.

3. There is a need for regional coordination between and among educators, government and the business community to decrease fragmentation, prevent duplication of efforts, and maximize resources

The RGV LEAD strategic plan also includes three goals and related strategies to address the region's critical challenges; those goals are as follows:

1. Coordinate regional initiatives focused on education and workforce development that support linkages with current and emerging organizations in the Rio Grande Valley to reduce duplication of services, maximize resources, decrease fragmentation, and improve effectiveness of education and workforce systems.

2. Increase the number and percentage of high school students, including tech prep and other career-focused students, who graduate and transition into higher education and/or the workforce.

3. Increase the number and percentage of college and university students, including tech prep and other career-focused students, who earn certificates, degrees and/or industry or state recognized licenses or certification and transition into the workforce.

RGV LEAD maintains records of participation in regional initiatives such as P-16 Council meetings, Counselors' Network meetings, RGV LEAD Scholars, RGV LEAD Student Ambassadors, and other initiatives that are designed to support progress on Goal 1.

RGV LEAD's contract with the Texas ERC was designed to provide data regarding progress on Goals 2 and 3, both of which focusing on accomplishments of tech prep and other career-focused students who complete programs of study and transition into higher education and/or the workforce.

The regional evaluation study and related data files for the region and for individual school districts, all produced by the Texas ERC, form the basis of RGV LEAD's 2014 regional data report and the individual data reports provided to RGV LEAD's school district partners.

ABOUT THE TEXAS EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTER (TEXAS ERC)

The Texas ERC is headquartered at the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources within The University of Texas at Austin's Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs. The Texas ERC is a research center that supports scientific inquiry and data-driven policy analysis using a clearinghouse of state-level information. Created by legislative mandate in 2006, the Texas ERC is an independent, non-partisan, and non-profit organization focused on generating data-based solutions for Texas education and workforce demands. The goal of the Texas ERC is to supply policymakers, practitioners, opinion leaders, the media, and the general public with academically sound research surrounding today's critical education issues.

The Texas ERC provides access to high-quality, longitudinal data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC), and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). The Texas ERC data resources span from the Pre-K level through higher education (P-16) and into the workforce. Researchers can use this rich warehouse of data to follow individual Texas students from their first day in school to their first day on the job.

To create data reports under its contract with RGV LEAD, the Texas ERC data utilized data from both TEA and THECB to describe high school and higher education outcomes. As students progressed into the workforce, the Texas ERC accessed information from TWC and analyzed that data to determine student workforce outcomes. Multiple data sets from all three state agencies were combined using a unique identifier in order to track students over time and different educational settings. Using this resource, high school graduates from 2009, 2010, and 2011 were matched against both higher education and workforce information to ascertain information on selected student outcomes. The Texas ERC provided RGV LEAD with a written regional report as well as data files that provided information about individual school districts that RGV LEAD could utilize to prepare individual school district reports.

STRUCTURE OF THE REGIONAL REPORT PROVIDED BY THE TEXAS ERC

The written regional report provided by the Texas ERC is organized in three parts. The first part of the report covers outcomes for Rio Grande Valley (Valley) students while in high school. (This section of the report provides data related to outcome measures for Goal 2 of RGV LEAD's 2012 strategic plan.) The second part of the report covers outcomes after high school including enrollment in post-secondary education, completion of post-secondary education program(s), and entry into the workforce. (Part 2 of the report addresses Goal 3 of RGV LEAD's 2012 strategic plan.) The third part addresses remediation enrollment and completion. Time periods covered are the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2011-2012 school years for the first part, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 years for the second part and the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 academic years for the third part. (Part 3 of the report addresses both Goal 2 and Goal 3 of RGV LEAD's strategic plan.) Taken together, the sections of the report provided by the Texas ERC allow RGV LEAD to measure progress on Goals 2 and 3 of RGV LEAD's strategic plan.

In creating the report, the Texas ERC utilized a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Student Indicator coding system employed by the Texas Education Agency in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) of Texas, described in the table below.

Description of Student's Participation in Career and Technical Education (CTE) Courses	PEIMS Code Utilized to Identify That Student
Student who is not enrolled in any CTE courses	0
Student who is enrolled in one CTE course, but not in a coherent sequence of CTE courses	1
Student who is enrolled in a program of study that includes a coherent sequence of CTE courses ("coherent sequence" is defined as two or more CTE courses for three or more credits)	2
Student who is a participant in a Tech Prep program of study, which is a planned program of study that incorporates academic and career-related courses that provide college credit between secondary and post-secondary levels leading to a diploma, degree, or post-secondary certificate	3

For purposes of RGV LEAD's strategic plan, students who were assigned PEIMS Codes 0 and 1 are "other students," students who are not pursuing either tech prep programs of study or career-focused programs of study. Students who are assigned PEIMS Code 2 are the "other career-focused students" identified in RGV LEAD's strategic plan, and students who are assigned PEIMS Code 3 are the "tech prep students" identified in RGV LEAD's strategic plan. (TEA is in the process of phasing out the "PEIMS 3" Student Indicator code, which identifies students enrolled in tech prep programs of study, but that code was in effect for all years covered by the Texas ERC report.)

The report provided by the Texas ERC makes comparisons between students in these ways.

- First, high school graduates from RGV LEAD districts are compared to Texas graduates of the same years.
- Second, students who participated in tech prep programs of study and other career-focused programs of study are also compared against each other (both within the RGV LEAD area and the state).
- The Texas ERC reports show data for students coded 0, 1, 2, and 3 for comparison purposes.

SUMMARY OF REPORT FINDINGS

Part One: High School Outcomes Including College-Ready Graduation Rates, Dropout Rates, Attendance Rates and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Passing Rates.

1. College-ready rates were based on the percentage of students who graduated under the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP). The rationale for using this measure is that this was the most rigorous graduation plan offered to high school students during the period of time covered by the Texas ERC study.

    a. Overall a higher percent of Valley students graduated under the DAP program than the state.

    b. In the Valley, a higher percentage of tech prep students graduated under the DAP program than their non-tech prep counterparts (see Table 1)

Table 1 Distinguished Achievement Program Graduation Plan Participation

	2009		2010		2011	
	RGV	**State**	**RGV**	**State**	**RGV**	**State**
Region and State Overall	22%	12%	25%	12%	24%	13%
PEIMS Code						
0 (students with no CTE courses)	11%	16%	11%	17%	10%	16%
1 (students with one CTE elective)	14%	9%	16%	9%	16%	10%
2 (students who are identified as other career-focused students)	17%	9%	17%	10%	18%	10%
3 (students who are identified as tech prep students)	34%	15%	39%	16%	38%	17%

2. Valley tech prep students were **less likely** to drop out of high school than Valley non-tech prep students. In the Valley the three-year average for the 2,258 students who dropped out during these three years is as follows:

   PEIMS Code 0: 50% PEIMS Code 2: 14%
   PEIMS Code 1: 26% PEIMS Code 3: 8%

   The same pattern is seen in the data for the State of Texas as a whole.

3. Overall there was little or no difference between the Valley and State attendance rates. In the Valley tech prep participants had better attendance rates than non-tech prep participants. Overall the data show that students with no participation in CTE courses had the lowest attendance rates–in the Valley a three-year average of 88% for PEIMS Code 0 versus a three-year average of 97% for PEIMS Codes 1, 2 and 3 combined.

4. Overall tech prep and other career-focused students had higher passing rates on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exams than their non-tech prep and other career-focused student counterparts. (The scores analyzed were those for students in the 11th grade in each year.)

Table 2 TAKS Passing Rates (Four-Year Averages--2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012) for Rio Grande Valley 11th Grade Students

PEIMS CODE	Reading	Math	Social Studies	Science
0 (students with no CTE courses)	83	79	92	76
1 (students with one CTE elective)	86	79	94	79
2 (students who are identified as other career-focused students)	88	86	96	85
3 (students who are identified as tech prep students)	96	92	99	92

Part 2: Post-Secondary and Workplace Outcomes Including Higher Education Enrollment Rates, Graduation Rates and Entry-into-Workplace Rates.

1. Overall Valley students had higher college/university enrollment rates than their counterparts at the state level–a three-year (2009, 2010 and 2011) average of 60% for the Valley compared to 55% for the State of Texas.

2. Valley tech prep students had higher college/university enrollment rates than their non-tech prep counterparts (see Table 3).

Table 3 Valley College/University Enrollment Rates

PEIMS CODE	2009	2010	2011	Three-Year Average
0 (students with no CTE courses)	45%	40%	40%	42%
1 (students with one CTE elective)	51%	51%	49%	50%
2 (students who are identified as other career-focused students)	55%	54%	55%	55%
3 (students who are identified as tech prep students)	76%	76%	71%	74%

3. Rio Grande Valley tech prep students who graduated in 2009 were more likely than non-tech prep students to have attained a post-secondary credential or degree in four years (by the end of 2013). (Other years were not included in this analysis because the time elapsed was less than four years. See Table 4).

4. Valley students in general were slightly less likely than the students from the state as a whole to have attained a post-secondary credential or degree in four years (2009-2013), and the state pattern based on PEIMS code is almost the reverse of that of the Valley (see Table 4).

Table 4 Any Post-Secondary Credential/Degree Attainment by 2013 for 2009 Valley High School Graduates

PEIMS CODE	Valley	State of Texas
0 (students with no CTE courses)	7%	15%
1 (students with one CTE elective)	7%	10%
2 (students who are identified as other career-focused students)	8%	11%
3 (students who are identified as tech prep students)	14%	11%
All Students	10%	11%

5. There were outliers, but in general the higher the degree type, the higher the average (mean) salary.

6. There were outliers, but in the long run participation in tech prep programs of study had little or no effect on average (mean) salary.

7. Mean salaries for Valley students tend to be lower than those of the state overall. However, factors that can impact salary, such as region, ethnicity, gender and major, were not considered.

Part 3: The Texas Success Initiative and Developmental Education

In Texas, all students must meet certain requirements before they can enroll in college-level credit–bearing courses in mathematics, reading and writing. The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) sets minimum requirements for math, reading and writing at the state level, and individual institutions have the option to set higher requirements. Students can meet TSI standards in a variety of ways that include scores on national college entrance tests as well as state-mandated tests such as TAKS (see page 72 of the full report for a complete description of ways students can meet TSI standards). When entering higher education, students must show evidence that they have met TSI standards; otherwise, the students will be tested at the individual institution. Those students who do not meet TSI standards in one or more of the three subject areas tested are required to take and pass developmental (remedial) non-credit courses before they are allowed to enroll in credit-bearing courses.

Studies show that students who are required to take developmental, non-credit courses are less likely to complete their college/university education than students who do not take developmental courses. One of the reasons for this outcome is that paying tuition for non-credit courses may deplete a student's eligibility for student aid or loans. For students who persevere, taking non-credit courses add to the time that students take to complete their coursework and may increase students' total student-loan debt.

The Texas ERC report shows that, in general, the Valley had a higher percentage of students who did not meet TSI standard than the state as a whole. However, among the student PEIMS categories, Valley tech prep and other career-focused students had lower numbers needing developmental education than their non-tech prep or other career-focused counterparts.

1. In the years reviewed, a higher percent of Valley students than students from the state as a whole did not meet the mathematics TSI standards at the time of initial enrollment in higher education. However, in the Valley, tech prep and other career-focused students were less likely to need developmental education than their non-tech prep or career-focused counterparts. (The numbers in the table below refer to the percentage of students who at some point in their enrollment were found not to have met the TSI requirement in mathematics, with comparisons for students from the Valley and students from the state as a whole.)

Table 5 Percent of High School Graduates NOT Meeting TSI Standards in Mathematics

PEIMS CODE	2009		2010		2011	
	RGV	Texas	RGV	Texas	RGV	Texas
0 (students with no CTE courses)	45%	32%	56%	34%	43%	34%
1 (students with one CTE elective)	47%	40%	52%	41%	44%	39%
2 (students who are identified as other career-focused students)	44%	41%	50%	42%	36%	40%
3 (students who are identified as tech prep students)	35%	36%	46%	38%	30%	35%
Total	40%	38%	49%	39%	36%	37%

2. The percentages for student achievement rates on the reading and writing TSI standards followed the same pattern as mathematics except that the overall percentage needing developmental education was a little lower. For reading: the Valley had a three-year average of 37% compared to 28% for the state as a whole. For writing: the Valley had a three-year average of 38% compared to 27% for the state as a whole.

3. Many students, both Valley and statewide, did not enroll in any developmental coursework in their first term in higher education. Some enrolled in non-credit-bearing courses in all three subject areas and some in just one or two developmental courses. The report indicates that 43% of Valley students who needed developmental courses registered in at least one developmental course in their first semester compared to 37% for the state.

4. Looking at those still needing developmental coursework after their first year, the data show that there were significant reductions in all subject areas for both the Valley and the state as a whole. The average reduction in math for the Valley was from 42% to 20%. The reduction for the state in math was from 38% to 18%. The reduction in reading for the Valley was from 37% to 14% for the Valley compared to a reduction from 28% to 9% for the state. The reduction in writing was 38% to 16% for the Valley and 28% to 10% for the state. (The lower percent represents those still needing remediation after their first term in higher education. This could happen because they waited to enroll in these courses or because they took and failed the course.)

CONCLUSION

The regional data report provided by the Texas ERC and commissioned by RGV LEAD indicates that Rio Grande Valley students who participated in tech prep programs of study had better outcomes in high school, higher education enrollment, higher education graduation and to some extent in workplace participation. However, the high percentage of all Valley students who need remediation cancels out a significant portion of this gain in high school graduation and enrollment in higher education. This need for remediation plus other factors converge to keep college/university graduation rates low. This is true for the whole nation and the state; however, it is especially troublesome in the Valley because the educational levels of the Valley's adult population are already much lower than those of the state or the nation.

The data in the 2014 regional report make it apparent that although progress is encouraging, the critical challenges identified in RGV LEAD's strategic plan in 2012 continue to exist at this time.

These Initiatives in which RGV LEAD and its partners are currently engaged will hopefully help make forward progress in addressing the region's critical challenges and helping Rio Grande Valley students succeed in higher education, careers, and life:

1. To help decrease the need for developmental education, RGV LEAD has embarked on a Ford Next-Generation Learning (Ford NGL) initiative that has proved successful with addressing similar issues in other parts of the nation. .

2. To help increase the percent of Valley students enrolled in Valley colleges and universities who earn a certificate or degree within six years, RGV LEAD facilitates collaboration through its work with secondary-higher education collaboration through regional P-16 Council and counselors network activities Completing a college degree program in six years is problematic because many Rio Grande Valley students have to work while pursuing education and are not enrolled full-time, but

rather as part-time students. RGV LEAD and its partners work together to identify barriers and propose solutions to the problems students encounter.

3. RGV LEAD's Ford NGL initiative is designed to increase the percent of Valley high school students that graduate with a credential that qualifies them for the workplace. About 35% of Valley high school graduates do not enroll in college immediately after graduation, and for these students, having a meaningful career goal is vital. Students who enroll in higher education but remain in the Valley to live and work must also be aware of the "good jobs" that are available or will be available in this region. In Ford NGL, RGV LEAD is developing a business-education collaborative that will assist Valley districts to design a curriculum that integrates academic and career and technical education and that is in line with the Valley's labor market requirements as indicated by RGV LEAD's Labor Market Information Report and the Ford NGL Industry Councils.

RGV LEAD's 2014 Regional Data Report identifies successes of which RGV LEAD and its partners can be proud and barriers that the collaborative must continue working to address. RGV LEAD counts it a privilege to work with its board of directors, corporate voting members, and regional partners to support continuing forward progress for the Valley's students and for the region as a whole.