

# STEP UP to USDA Career Success

(Science, Technology & Environmental Programs for Undergraduate Preparation to USDA Career Success)

**USDA/NIFA HSI Award # 2011-38422-30826**

**\$825,000 (2013-2014); \$ 3.35 million over 4 years (2011-2015)**

**4 yr. Collaborating Institutions:** *Texas A&M University-Kingsville (Lead Institution); S.D. Nelson, T. Machado, and R. Stanko (PDs) (Co-PDs) E. Louzada, D. Ruppert, G. Schuster, M. Setamou, J. Melgar University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX; M. Persans (Co-PD)*

**2 yr. Collaborating Institutions:** *South Texas College, Weslaco, TX; D. Villalon (Co-PD) Texas State Technical College, Harlingen, TX; A. Duarte (Co-PD) Del Mar Community College, Corpus Christi, TX; J. Halcomb (Co-PD)*

## Mission & NIFA Priorities

**Mission:** To attract, support and train the current generation of underrepresented post-secondary students for careers related to the food, agricultural, biological, environmental, and natural resource systems and prepare them to enter the USDA workforce.

**Priorities:** This project enhances the competitiveness of a primarily Hispanic undergraduate population to obtain careers in the food and agricultural sciences by facilitating the collaboration between 5 Hispanic Serving Institutions and the USDA.

## Objectives

**Objective 1:** To form a collaborative effort between 5 South Texas HSI and several USDA agencies to provide undergraduate education and hands-on training to underrepresented South Texas students to prepare Hispanic Americans for Federal USDA careers.

**Objective 2:** To provide undergraduate students with intensive short-courses based in soils, biotechnology, livestock and meat grading, and environmental sciences that prepare them for soils, biological, animal agriculture, and natural resource science-related internships and careers.

**Objective 3:** To provide summer undergraduate internship experiences with agricultural- and natural resources-related USDA agencies as fast track preparation for USDA career success.

## Activities

**Summer Short-courses: Agricultural Science Education, Soil and Crop Science, Environmental Science, Animal Science, Meat Science, & Agribusiness.**



### USDA Internships Agencies 2013:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
- Forrest Service (FS)
- Plant Materials Center (NRCS-PMC)
- Plant Protection and Quarantine (APHIS-PPQ)

### Additional Internships 2013:

- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Texas A&M Citrus Center, Natural Toxin Research Center
- TAMUK, Purdue University, Del Mar, UTPA, Ceasar Kleberg Wildlife Institute
- King Ranch, Cargill
- Gladys Porter Zoo, Chattanooga Zoo
- Poplar Hill Dairy Goat Farm
- More Air Field Base
- Incell Corporation

**Internship Locations**



## Beneficiaries

### South Texas Students

(Underserved, Economically Challenged, Hispanic Population)

- Financial assistance through scholarships
- Obtain college degrees
- Acquire science-based skills
- Increase competitiveness in the workforce

### USDA Agencies

- Larger pool of qualified minority applicants
- Applicants will have experience
- Applicants will have educational requirements for federal employment
- Workforce that represents demographics across the U.S.

## Impact

**Years 1, 2, & 3:** Over 100 undergraduates had internships with a USDA agency (NRCS, AMS, ARS, APHIS or FS) or other research-science based agencies/industries. A bridge has been created between 2 year and 4 year institutions as it has increased the number of students transferring after obtaining an Associates degree, and they can receive the minimum degree requirements to qualify for USDA careers upon graduation.

**External Program Evaluation:** Dr. Stacey Clettenberg will annually assess program performance through an external evaluation and coupled her findings with an overall meta-analysis performed by another external evaluator that will incorporate the impact of this multi-institutional collaborative program with that of other collaborative HSI grants.