DID THE FORD FOUNDATION’S RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVE PRODUCE TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE?
A CASE STUDY OF SOUTHWEST TEXAS JUNIOR COLLEGE

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of Southwest Texas Junior College’s (SWTJC) participation in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) from 1994 to 2002. Fifteen years after the program ended, how embedded were a major foundation’s program initiatives on SWTJC students, organizational structure, and economic development? The Ford Foundation’s two overarching objectives for RCCI were increasing access to higher education and building regional economies in high poverty regions (Appalachia, Four Corners, Tribal High Plains, and Texas Border).

The findings confirm the Ford Foundation’s belief that rural community colleges are powerful tools to reverse longstanding trends of rural Americans living in persistent poverty. In 1990, prior to SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI, all 11 counties served by SWTJC had lived with persistent poverty rates of greater than 30% including rates nearing 50%. By 2010, seven of the eleven counties had recorded double-digit reductions in their poverty rates. As SWTJC lifted 11.2% of its population out of poverty from 1990 to 2010, the United States recorded a 1.6% increase in the number of people living in poverty.

SWTJC provides services to an 11-county state-assigned area that covers 16,712 square miles. A quirk in Texas law created a “in-taxing district” and an “out-of-taxing district” for all 50 Texas community college districts. In the case of SWTJC, those students living within the taxing district pay 61% less than those students living outside of the taxing district. Not surprisingly, the author found higher rates of attendance and completion success in the counties where tuition was lower, and Pell grants went farther. Despite the financial obstacles created by Texas lawmakers,
access to higher education increased meaningfully. From 1994 to 2013, fall enrollment increased by 72%, unduplicated headcount increased by 54%, and contact credit hours increased by 55%, with 66% of contact hours delivered to students living outside of the taxing district.

The findings illustrate how relatively small investments in planning and activity grants, and coaching to provide specialized personnel and training activities focused on capacity building and implementing a data-driven, inclusive strategic planning framework has the real potential to change lives for the better.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am humbled and grateful for the tremendous support received from the faculty in the Executive Ed.D. Program in Higher Education Administration at The University of Alabama. This began in 2009 with my interactions with Drs. Jennifer Jones and Michael Harris. I am thankful for their constant encouragement both inside and outside of the classroom, and that each and every faculty member in this journey truly possessed a desire for my success. Additionally, my fellow cohort and work colleagues have remained supportive, offering a shoulder to lean on or helping hand that lifted my spirits. To all of you, my sincere thanks.

A special word of thanks to my committee members, Dr. Michael Kennamer, Dr. Pat Moeck, Dr. Anne Williamson, Dr. Chris Thomas, and Dr. Nathaniel Bray for their support and encouragement. My dissertation chair has had the largest impact on my life. Dr. Stephen Katsinas works tirelessly to bring awareness to the pent-up power in our nation’s 600 community and tribal colleges to reverse the trajectory of poverty that plagues all too many areas across rural America. I have never met anyone with as much passion for community colleges as Dr. Katsinas. Also, Dr. Katsinas introduced me to the late Dr. Robert Pederson, one of the most knowledgeable people on community college history and finance issues I've ever met.

I appreciate the patience that my family has shown during these past seven years. I will never be able to properly express, to my wife, how much her undying support encouraged me to cross the finish line.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

History

The Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) was a $17.2 million program managed from 1994 until 2003 by Manpower Development, Inc. of (MDC) Chapel Hill, North Carolina. According to Kennamer and Katsinas (2011), who wrote on its early history, the RCCI’s two primary goals were to expand access to higher education and economic development. This was reinforced in a video interview with Steve Zwerling and Betsy Campbell, senior program officers within two different divisions of the Ford Foundation (Education, Media Arts and Culture, and Agriculture and Food Systems). Campbell stated, “in one part of the Foundation there is a long history of working in collaboration with local institutions to increase economic opportunities.” Zwerling added, “and in another part of the foundation, there is a long history of helping educational institutions enhance opportunities for people who have historically not been well served.” Zwerling expressed concerns towards providing local jobs at the end of the educational journey, “so that people who found themselves getting more (and better) education would have jobs locally and not have to leave.” Campbell said, “for that reason we turned to rural community colleges because that is what they are about.” The Ford Foundation was therefore looking for ways to use community colleges as intermediary institutions to lift up areas of persistent rural poverty in the United States (Ford Foundation, 1996).

The managing partner of this multi-million dollar initiative was MDC, Inc., of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, initially founded as the Manpower Development Corporation to help lift up that state's rural organizations and communities (hereafter, MDC). Charged with developing a
framework for RCCI that built upon the unique “respected neighbor” persona for their regions, MDC’s RCCI framework consists of participation from public, private and nonprofit sectors, to...close the gaps that separate people from opportunity. An essential part of MDC’s philosophy is that the pathway to opportunity is cleared by creating equity—removing the social, financial, and educational barriers that make it harder for those left behind to take advantage of the opportunities America offers. We do this by first creating a will for change—getting to know a community or organization, connecting leaders across social and political lines, and helping them understand the particular barriers they face. We highlight gaps through historical and statistical research, we identify solutions with a high potential for success, and we mobilize leaders to address the issues raised. From that work comes sustainable programs and systemic change that can connect people with the financial supports to stabilize their lives, the education and training they need to get better jobs, and the industries that will benefit from their labors and improve the entire community. (MDC, 2012, p. 1)

The concept that community colleges are distinctively positioned as “trusted advisors” within their local regions is not new. Raymond J. Young, who directed the broad-based citizen’s participation studies that resulted in the founding of 60 community colleges in 19 States, describes the nonpartisan and neutral role that the community college must fulfill in order to provide access to higher education and uplift the community through a firm service foundation (Katsinas, 2008). The goal of Young’s studies was to gauge the demand for services in a specific geographic area from the community college. In his report to the Board of Trustees of the Kansas City Metropolitan Junior College District he explains the unique role and positioning of a community college with an emphasis on what services a community college should offer.
The community services dimension of the community college function derives its legitimacy as does the institution itself from its educational role. A college is not after all a governing agency, a social welfare agency, a museum, a social club, an institution of religion, a voluntary association, an employment agency, a theater, or a labor union. Colleges are educational institutions. Community services are legitimate only to the extent to which they represent an extension or expansion of the educational resources directed toward the economic, social, cultural, and civic needs of the people the college serves. The college cannot always be a “prime mover” for change and its role may often be a coordinative or supportive one. It will sometimes need to assume a “partnership” role in reference to personal and community development.

… the community services program, by drawing upon its role as college-community liaison and catalyst, can provide the impetus needed for the college to focus on institutional redirection, so part of its impact will be to make the community a better one. (Young, 1973, p. 124)

Their trusted role provides the community college with the ability to act as that required spark to get a certain activity or event within their region initiated. Community colleges provide that “common ground” and are trusted across social classes, whereas other institutions are not (MDC, 2001), thus providing the catalyst for successful and timely collaborations. Through rural community colleges, it was hoped the continued decline of rural America could be stemmed, and some of America’s poorest regions with persistently high unemployment and poverty left behind in the economic boom of the 1990s could be lifted up.

To conduct its original survey, the Ford Foundation initially hired Community Colleges of Appalachia, a consortium of 80 community colleges across the 13 states that serve the 420
federally-designated counties in the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). The ARC was created by Congress "to address the persistent poverty and growing economic despair of the Appalachian region" in the mid-1960s. At the time, according to the ARC, (1) one of every three Appalachians lived in poverty, (2) per capita income was 23 percent lower than the U.S. average, and (3) high unemployment and harsh living conditions had, in the 1950s, forced more than 2 million Appalachians to leave their homes and seek work in other regions. The Conference of Appalachian Governors was formed in 1960 to develop a regional approach to resolving these problems; in 1961, they took their case to newly elected President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, who had been deeply moved by the poverty he saw during campaign trips to West Virginia. Kennedy formed a federal-state committee that came to be known as the President's Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC), and in 1963 directed it to draw up "a comprehensive program for the economic development of the Appalachian Region."

The resulting program outlined in an April 1964 report was endorsed by the Conference of Appalachian Governors and Cabinet-level officials, and was the basis for the bipartisan Appalachian Regional Development Act (P.L. 89-4) signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on March 9, 1965 (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2014a). The ARC is composed of governors from the 13 Appalachian states and a federal co-chair, who is appointed by the President of the United States. The ARC claims its infrastructure (physical and human capital) investments have helped lift a region which is 42 percent rural, compared to the national average of about 20 percent: In 1965, one in three Appalachians lived in poverty, by 2008, the Region's poverty rate was 18 percent (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2011). In 1965, 223 of the 420 Appalachian counties were defined as economically distressed, in Fiscal Year 2013 that number had declined to 98 (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2014b). It is important to note that the
founder of MDC, the late George Autry, was intimately involved with the ARC and other anti-poverty programs of the "Great Society" era.

Kennamer and Katsinas (2011) document how the Community Colleges of Appalachia (CCA) study preceded and informed the multi-million dollar investment by the Ford Foundation in its Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). To provide a framework by which community colleges in high poverty areas might be invited to participate, CCA's Eldon Miller and Robert Pedersen chose to use the definition of persistent poverty counties developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS). According to ERS,

An area's economic and social characteristics have significant effects on its development and need for various types of public programs. To provide policy-relevant information about diverse county conditions to policymakers, public officials, and researchers, ERS has developed a set of county-level typology codes that captures differences in economic and social characteristics.

The 2004 County Typology codes classify all U.S. counties according to six non-overlapping categories of economic dependence and seven overlapping categories of policy-relevant themes. The economic types include farming, mining, manufacturing, services, Federal/State government, and unspecialized counties. The policy types include housing stress, low education, low employment, persistent poverty, population loss, non-metro recreation, and retirement destination. In addition, a code identifying counties with persistent child poverty is available. (Economic Research Service, 2012, p. 1)

The CCA study that preceded RCCI thus used an analysis by the Appalachian Regional Commission of the 3,031 counties, boroughs, and parishes across the United States from 1990, and using the ERS definition found, that the Census Bureau had classified 319 rural counties as
having "severely persistent poverty." Among these 319 rural counties, most were clustered in four regions: Upper Appalachia, Lower Appalachia/Mississippi Delta, the Four Corners region of the Southwest, and the tribal areas of the High Plains (Kennamer & Katsinas, 2011).

Additional rural counties with persistent poverty and high unemployment are found along the Texas border with Mexico. Could rural community and tribal colleges be used as vehicles or intermediaries to provide expanded access to higher education and economic development? These are important questions to policy makers today.

Increasingly, federal officials see community colleges as place-based regional intermediaries that can be used across federal cabinet agencies and executive programs to promote place-based regional rural innovation. According to a 2010 White House Memorandum to Heads of Executive Departments and Cabinet Agencies, federal policy should have effective place-based policies as its goal. “Our goal is to continue applying place-based principles to existing policies, potential reforms, and promising innovations, with a particular focus on strengthening economic growth and achieving greater cost effectiveness” (Orszag, Barnes, Derek, & Summers, 2010). The memorandum was signed by Peter R. Orszag, Office of Management and Budget; Melody C. Barnes, Domestic Policy Council; Derek Douglas, Domestic Policy Council and Office of Urban Affairs; Lawrence Summers, National Economic Council. Additionally, on March 2, 2012, the Rural Council of the White House Domestic Policy Issues Staff hosted a delegation of presidents who are members of the Rural Community College Alliance (RCCA). At this meeting, officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) – whose Rural Development division oversees $20 billion in yearly expenditures and revolving loan programs of over $132 billion annually, is statutorily responsible for the economic development of rural America just as the Department of Housing and Urban Development is for
urban areas stated their desire to use rural community colleges as regional intermediaries.

Further, RCCA officials met with undersecretaries from USDA, U.S. Department of Education (USED), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and senior White House aides to discuss regional rural innovation.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture signed a memo of understanding (MOU) on March 2, 2012, with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the RCCA to strengthen the rural economy by focusing their resources on rural residents’ ability to gain access to skills training and higher education. In a USDA news release on March 2, 2012, Dallas Tonsager the Undersecretary for Rural Development stated:

We need well-trained and properly educated students to compete and win in the world market and build a strong economy. This agreement calls for rural community colleges and USDA to work together more closely to improve the accessibility and quality of education in rural communities. This partnership will help businesses create jobs and grow the rural economy. (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2012)

Partnerships with community colleges are defined as a coordination strategy in the Agricultural Act of 2014. Section 6018 Rural College Coordinated Strategy of the Agricultural Act of 2014 has four sections, and serves as an amendment to section 331 of the consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1981). Section 6018 adds the following:

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall develop a coordinated strategy across the relevant programs within the Rural Development mission areas to serve the specific, local needs of rural communities when making investments in rural community colleges and technical colleges through other authorities in effect on the date of enactment of this subsection.
(2) CONSULTATION.—In developing a coordinated strategy, the Secretary shall consult with groups representing rural serving community colleges and technical colleges to coordinate critical investments in rural community colleges and technical colleges involved in workforce training.

(3) ADMINISTRATION.—Nothing in this subsection provides a priority for funding under authorities in effect on the date of enactment of this subsection.

(4) USE.—The Secretary shall use the coordinated strategy and information developed for the strategy to more effectively serve rural communities with respect to investments in community colleges and technical colleges. (U.S. Congress, 2014)

Collaborative partnerships as described by the USDA, RCCA, AACC and the U.S. Congress (2014) have the potential to provide subject matter expertise in setting priorities for investing scarce federal and local government dollars.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to document, through qualitative case method, the long-term transformative changes, if any, in the mission and functions of Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) that have followed its participation in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). Responding to a bleak economic outlook of distressed rural regions across the nation, the Ford Foundation established its Rural Community College Initiative in 1994. An economic boom was underway nationally but many rural areas were left behind. This national demonstration program focused on providing the tools and knowledge required to assist the people and their communities to move themselves toward prosperity by means of strengthening local rural community colleges, which are uniquely positioned, to become economic leaders in their regions and agents for community development. Two overarching
objectives of the RCCI were increasing access to higher education and building regional economies. Reaching these objectives was to be accomplished by supporting aggressive and innovative efforts that increase the number of jobs, income, and access to higher education in rural communities.

The RCCI, which ran from 1994 to 2001 (Salant & Kane, 2007), was a $17.2 million dollar commitment from the two major divisions within the Ford Foundation – Education and Culture, and Rural Poverty and Resources. A key document guiding the Ford Foundation in their work with MDC, Inc., (the Chapel Hill, NC-based nonprofit that managed RCCI for Ford), was the Parkersburg Study. This was developed for the Ford Foundation by Eldon Miller and Robert Pedersen on behalf of the Community Colleges of Appalachia. Miller and Pedersen both worked at West Virginia University-Parkersburg, where CCA was hosted; hence, the study became known as the Parkersburg Study.

Stephen G. Katsinas was hired by Miller and Pedersen to conduct fieldwork visiting leading community colleges in five rural-remote regions of the country: Appalachia, the Lower Mississippi Delta, the Tribal Colleges of the High Plains, the Four Corners Region of the Southwest, and the Texas Border region (Kennamer & Katsinas, 2011). Katsinas’ 25 page, single-spaced, unpublished notes were the starting point for a 216-page 2005 doctoral dissertation at the University of North Texas written by Christopher J. Thomas, and chaired by Katsinas, which sought to document if and how the RCCI transformed SWTJC (Thomas, 2005).

Thomas’ 2005 study included chapters that described the following topics: The People of Uvalde and SWTJC; Setting the Stage for Transformation; Expanding Access and Growing Educational Partnerships; Expanding Economic Opportunity on the Border; The Administration and Governance; Curriculum and Faculty; and Financing Growth. However, it quickly became
apparent that not enough time had passed between the end of the RCCI in 2001 and Thomas’s extensive field work in 2004 to judge if the programs put in place (thanks to Ford Foundation and its RCCI) had truly made a difference in two important dimensions: First, the number of persons served and programs delivered in the economic development realm, and second, how the broader mission and key functions of the institution had been transformed as a result of their participation in the RCCI. Sadly, since it ended in 2002, the RCCI has been the sole national program for rural community colleges funded by a major foundation in the United States over the past 15 years.

The RCCI advanced a conceptual framework to achieve prosperity for the people and communities in distressed rural regions of America. The original 1994 framework was updated in 2001 to include new ideas in a philosophy to guide activities among all RCCI colleges. Additionally, the RCCI’s model encouraged colleges “to think broadly about their potential as catalysts for regional development” (MDC, 2001). In order for distressed rural areas to accomplish purposeful regional development, the RCCI focused on five key principles that “served as an unwavering foundation” by which colleges are coached in the strategies required to form partnerships with their communities:

1) rural America matters, 2) healthy communities focus on their assets, 3) change begins with self-assessment, 4) effective change requires collaboration and inclusiveness, and 5) equity and high expectations should undergird education and economic development goals. (MDC, 2001, p. 2)

However, the RCCI did not prescribe any specific strategies, solution-sets, or combination of activities to address their individual distraught regions. Instead, RCCI encouraged an environment of innovation, anticipating that this approach would ignite local and long-lasting
strategies of economic development and educational access though purposeful partnership with their communities. To support this effort, MDC, Inc. created *A Toolkit for Rural Community Colleges*. Included in this toolkit were a set of videos and print materials that provided an introduction to the RCCI and an overview of processes utilized to accomplish their two primary targets of developing the economy and increasing access to higher education. The RCCI formed as a partnership among 24 pilot rural community colleges, MDC, the American Council on Education, and the Ford Foundation. Each was tasked with different areas of responsibility to the initiative. Later the American Council on Education would hand off their evaluation role to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The AACC provided historical documentation and evaluation, while MDC’s primary role was to manage the RCCI. As a third-party manager, MDC attempted to clearly define processes for developing collaborations as demonstrated in their strategic planning method of moving from vision to action. MDC developed a planning guide that included a nine-step process that aided colleges to “move from vision to action,” by helping community colleges and their partners develop strategies in a systematic methodical process to reach the two main goals of the RCCI, increasing economic development and access to higher education.

MDC’s *Vision to Action Toolkit* provided pilot RCCI colleges a process to guide regional teams through strategic planning, albeit without calling it strategic planning. The *Vision to Action Toolkit* laid out nine steps to follow as a means to assess their current status, and to provide a framework as to determine how to take action to improve that status. In its introduction, the nine sequential step process was offered as a proven recipe for success, with the caution to participants about becoming too rigid in its execution. MDC suggested that following these nine steps worked for “educators, boards of directors of community-based community
colleges, and volunteers involved in regional strategic planning efforts” (MDC, 1998). Those steps, in order from Step One to Step Nine, are as follows: (1) collect and analyze data, (2) describe the current situation, (3) create a vision, (4) set goals, (5) develop strategies, (6) analyze stakeholders’ influence, (7) plan for funding and sustainability, (8) plan for action, and (9) plan an evaluation.

Southwest Texas Junior College exercised the principles outlined in MDC’s *Moving from Vision to Action* planning process over a seven-month period from September 15, 1994 to April 15, 1995, as it implemented their grant proposal (Southwest Texas Junior College, 1995). SWTJC’s oversight and planning model consisted of a Regional Planning Committee, a Rural Community College Initiative Planning Team, and the SWTJC Faculty Task Force. The planning process embodied the principles set by the RCCI and began with a $30,000 planning grant to guide SWTJC in spending an additional $325,000 as an implementation grant, followed by two continuation grants over the following six years. The Ford Foundation and MDC required planning teams to include a broad-base participation that included representatives from the region with the RCCI Planning Team as illustrated in the following table (See Table 1.1).

In addition to this 10-member leadership team, there were approximately 30 individuals representing a myriad of organizations in the region who together comprised the Regional Planning Committee. A third team was comprised of 20 members of faculty who held key leadership roles at SWTJC. Southwest Texas Junior College exhibits its understanding of the RCCI’s fourth principle of “effective change requires collaboration and inclusiveness” through the wide spectrum of participants they selected to serve. The 10-member committee included four minorities, four women, as well as five persons not affiliated with the College.
Table 1.1
*Rural Community College Initiative Planning Team for Southwest Texas Junior College, 1995*

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<th>NAME</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sammy Juve</td>
<td>Bank Manager</td>
<td>NBC Bank, Eagle Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia Page</td>
<td>Branch Manager</td>
<td>Security Services Federal Credit Union, Uvalde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Jose Pena</td>
<td>Agricultural Economist</td>
<td>Texas A &amp; M University Agricultural Extension Service, Uvalde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria Rivera</td>
<td>Dean of Instructional Services</td>
<td>SWTJC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noe Sauceda</td>
<td>Assistant Economist</td>
<td>Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Thomas</td>
<td>Director of Del Rio Center</td>
<td>SWTJC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Vaughn</td>
<td>Economic Development Officer</td>
<td>Middle Rio Grande Valley Development Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Whipple</td>
<td>Director of Technical and Vocational Education</td>
<td>SWTJC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy Word</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>SWTJC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchel Burchfield</td>
<td>Strategic Planning Officer and Project Director of RCCI Planning Grant</td>
<td>SWTJC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Further evidence of the cooperative nature required to reach the goals of the RCCI was documented in Christopher J. Thomas’s 2005 study, *Southwest Texas Junior College: Transformation on the Border*. Thomas conducted three site visits to SWTJC that included a two-day visit in May of 2002 followed by an expanded visit in July of 2004 for an entire month, concluding with a one-week follow up visit in May of 2005. The data collected during his multiple visits to SWTJC along with reports and other documents resulted in Thomas’s 216-page case study. Thomas set out to validate whether or not the College’s participation in the RCCI produced notable transformation along the border of Texas at Southwest Texas Junior College. Thomas organized his nine-chapter case study into two parts, with the first four chapters describing key elements about the region and the College before its participation in the Rural Community College Initiative: 1) *Introduction*, 2) *The Middle Rio Grande Valley: Uvalde-The

Thomas’s goal was to document the transformation of the college, if any, based on the two primary goals of RCCI expanding access to higher education, and to help the College become a catalyst for economic development within their region. His study addressed five research questions:

(1) Did participation in the Rural Community College Initiative change Southwest Texas Junior College?

(2) How did participation in RCCI impact the College’s organization, administration, and finances?

(3) How did participation in RCCI change how the faculty approach what they do?

(4) In what ways did participation in RCCI change students and student services at SWTJC? and

(5) How did participation in RCCI impact SWTJC’s efforts in delivering extending access and economic development? (Thomas, 2005, p. 4)

Thomas concluded that the participation in the RCCI significantly changed Southwest Texas Junior College and this transformation was observable in many facets of its organization.
For example, specialized full-time positions were added with Ford Foundation’s funding during this process that included an institutional researcher, a grant writer, a public relations officer, and a workforce development officer. By adding these specialized positions, the College increased its internal capacity to develop even more innovative programs. Prior to RCCI’s involvement and the advent of hiring a full-time grant writer, the college received $5,066,217 in grant funding equating to 33% of the college’s operating budget; by 2005 grant funding had increased to $12,454,787, representing 44% of the college’s operating budget (Thomas, 2005). There is an obvious distinction drawn between the addition of a grant writer and the exponential increase in grant-awarded funding for SWTJC during its participation in RCCI. However, determining quantitative measures of economic development for that region were not mature enough to report, because of the relatively small amount of time that had elapsed from the end of SWTJC’s participation with RCCI (1994-2002) and Thomas’s three visits that concluded in 2005.

Methodology

The purpose of this historical organizational case study is to document the lasting institutional transformational change resulting from Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). This study will examine and describe the context in which Southwest Texas Junior College attempted to achieve transformational change through its exposure to the Ford Foundation’s RCCI. The RCCI was a combined programming effort of two divisions, the Rural Poverty and Resources Division, and the Education and Cultural Division.

Merriam (2009) defines different types of qualitative case studies and leans on work by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) that differentiates historical organizational case studies, observational case studies, and life histories. The researcher has chosen to utilize the framework of a historical
organizational case study, because it will study the development or evolution of an organization over time (Merriam, 2009, p. 47). The key ingredient of this type of study is nestled in the investigation of a specific occurrence over a period of time. Yin (2009) noted that histories and case studies begin to overlap during a study that contains contemporary events. Yin (2009) further explains that using a historical framework allows the researcher to explore the dead past when there are no relevant persons alive to either report, or provide a retrospective view of past events. The historical perspective approach provides a means to answer the “how” and “why” questions. In this event, the researcher relies on primary and secondary documents as well as cultural and physical artifacts as the main sources of evidence (p. 11). Additionally, Yin (2009) explains that a case study is preferred when examining contemporary events, and that approach adds two additional sources of evidence direct observation of the events being studied, and interviews of the person involved in the events.

Therefore, the proposed historical organizational case study is bound by Southwest Texas Junior College focusing on the institutional context before, during, and in the ten years after its participation in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative. This study will provide descriptions of the physical environment of southwest Texas, institutional characteristics of Southwest Texas Junior College, and an assessment as to the relative impact of SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI. The study will begin by describing salient observations about the College and region prior to participation in the RCCI at the time of Katsinas’ 1994-1995 site visits on behalf of the Ford Foundation. This is followed by describing the College immediately after its eight-year participation in the RCCI and whether or not the two primary goals of economic development and access to higher education were reached at SWTJC in 2003. This section is largely informed by Thomas’s 2005 study. Next, is a description of the College a
decade after its participation with the RCCI, to discover what sustainable benefits, if any, can be observed from SWTJC’s participation. Content analysis of primary and secondary sources including, but not limited to, Katsinas’ original 1994 site notes, local news stories, MDC notes and publications, SWTJC meeting minutes, journal articles, numerous Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) websites, Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) website on Texas’ failed community college finances, and participant observation. The study will include extensive field work at Southwest Texas Junior College, but prior to the field work, will carefully analyze extensive reports, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) self-study data, grant narratives (particularly Title V and TRIO grants), and SWTJC’s 2011 application for the Aspen Prize.

This study follows the framework provided by the late Burton R. Clark in the appendix of his seminal 1960’s work *The Open Door College*. Clark provides a book length treatment on the evolution of San Jose Junior College in San Jose California. This study will follow the “tell the story” approach provided by Clark to develop a picture of Southwest Texas Junior College prior to its involvement with the RCCI, following the institution to the point where the College is positioned a decade after the RCCI program has ended. Clark (1960) explains his approach in a detailed methodological note found in the appendix,

The research was almost entirely carried out by informal means- by unstructured interview and observation and the perusal of documents (p. 180) …Hence the study relied almost completely on informal methods. The informal procedures permitted intensive work with selected sources. To ask about the determinants of a particular policy, it is more promising to go to the five persons likely to know than to the fifty that do not know (p. 181) …While formal techniques can contribute to this quest in organizational studies
of the level and type represented here, they can hardly be relied upon as the sole or perhaps even the major source of significant information. (Clark, 1960, p. 182)

Clark’s case study approach was also deployed by Thomas in his 2005 study of SWTJC. This author’s research methodology relied on content analysis for both primary and secondary sources that did not require multiple trips to SWTJC. Gaining access to many of those resources is exponentially more readily available during the second decade of the 2000’s with the advent of the Internet. When Thomas performed his study, there was much less in the way of available online resource materials that could be examined. A major function of the Ford Foundation funding was to upgrade the college's information technology systems, so that distance learning could be provided across SWTJC’s three campuses and two outreach centers, which are spread across an 11-county “service-area” with a land mass that is larger than the State of Massachusetts. The result of the general move into an online world means that numerous previously unavailable reports are now available for analysis to add greater depth and breadth to the fact books, federal data, annual financial reports, and the regional accreditation self-study reports that were at the heart of Thomas’ research design from 2002 to 2005. After extensive document analysis, the researcher visited SWTJC in order to conduct in-depth interviews as well as executing participant observations. Just as Clark in his study was exploring the evolution of San Jose Junior College, this work explores the evolution of SWTJC during and especially after its participation, in the RCCI initiative. It is hoped that this work sheds light on if and how the Ford Foundation-sponsored activities and initiatives became institutionalized over time.
Research Questions

The following research questions directed this study:

1) Did Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative matter in the lives of the students it serves, and if so, how?
   1a) What ways it impacted access to higher education?
   1b) It transformed finances at SWTJC?
   1c) It changed how the faculty executed their responsibilities?
   1d) What ways it altered the organization?

2) Did Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative matter in the economic development of the communities it serves, and if so, how?

3) What activities, if any, generated by Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative are embedded in the life of the College a decade after participation ended?
CHAPTER 2:
DEFINING THE ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) has struggled to extend access to higher education and workforce training across an 11-county sparsely populated region with substantial numbers of people historically underserved. To provide context to assess Southwest Texas Junior College’s (SWTJC) participation in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), this chapter provides a description of the physical characteristics and a brief history of SWTJC’s state-assigned service area. This is followed by a description of the struggle and history of the college from the first opening of its doors in Uvalde following its establishment just after World War II, and how the state-assigned service area expanded without expansion of its tax base. Next, the discussion will focus on severely persistent poverty in rural America generally and southwest Texas specifically; leading to a call to change from the traditional economic development strategies of the rural South by challenging the status quo of trying to “land the big one.” The chapter concludes with RCCI’s operating philosophy in the form of a nine step process known as “Vision to Action.”

Inhabitants of this region have thus demonstrated a long-term reliance on the land’s natural resources. In his 2005 study, Christopher J. Thomas provides the following vivid description: Driving down its primary thoroughfare, US highway 90, one can see beside the Wal-Mart and the HEB grocery store countless mom and pop taco huts. It is the social and cultural regional hub for the citizens of this not-so-populated part of the American Southwest.
Uvalde is a place where stands for hunting deer can be seen for sale from the time you enter the city until you leave it. They are even sold outside one of the main grocery stores! The ties between the citizens of this region and the land go back as far as humans have settled this area. With an economy primarily based on agriculture, most people here have some kind of tie back to the land for a living. From farming such diverse crops as pecans, and spinach to ranching goats, sheep, and cattle, this land has provided sustenance to its residents for eons. (Thomas, 2005, p. 8)

The current state-assigned eleven county service area for Southwest Texas Junior College consists of 16,712 square miles. Many have heard that age-old saying of “everything is bigger in Texas,” however even by Texas standards this service area is huge. The United States of America includes nine states that are smaller than SWTJC’s state-assigned service region: Rhode Island, Delaware, Connecticut, Hawaii, New Jersey, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maryland (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, the adage that everything is bigger in Texas falls flat when the focus shifts to State funding for community colleges. According to 2004 population data from the U.S. Census Bureau, and reported state tax funds for operating expenses of higher education from Grapevine historical data tables at Illinois State University, the per capita expenditures are low. The funding obstacles SWTJC faces in attempting to provide access to higher education in their 11-county service area are severe. For example, Hawaii has a land mass of 6,423 square miles - 38% of the area serviced by SWTJC. Hawaii provides approximately $325 per capita or 894% more than the approximately $35 per capita the State of Texas provides for the population served by SWTJC. The funding gap in Texas becomes more obvious because all nine states that have a smaller land mass than SWTJC have a higher allocation for public higher education. The ranges are from approximately 245% ($86.60) to
894% ($315.82) more per capita in 2004 (Illinois State University, 2011). Chapter 7 will provide more discussion on financing access issues.

SWTJC’s service area is vast, expansive area of land that possesses unique characteristics tied to native and natural resources. Google Earth provides a unique ability to “fly over” the area. Originally funded by the Central Intelligence Agency and created by Keyhole Inc., Google Earth, was purchased by Google in 2005 and provides a virtual view of the globe. According to the Texas State Historical Association, elevations in southwest Texas range from as low as 400 feet above sea level in Frio and Maverick Counties, to the higher elevations above 2000 feet for the counties of Edwards, Kinney, Real, and Val Verde. Two counties that themselves have large elevation changes include Medina, which ranges from 635 to 1995, and Uvalde, which ranges from 700 to 2000 feet above sea level. Elevations are difficult to distinguish when using Google Earth, however the vast unpopulated areas and minimal roads across and within the region become obvious when using such technology tools.

The eleven counties SWTJC serves all have natural resource-based economies. For example, dating to the early 1900’s, settlers of Edwards County determined that the area was not suitable for farming, but could provide ample natural food for sheep and Angora goats that produce wool and mohair (Leffler, 2012a). Ranching continues to dominate the economy of Dimmit County with fewer than 5% of the land used for cultivation. However, counties like Dimmit were able to evolve from predominately ranch land into farmland. The Texas State Historical Association identifies a documentable period of growth in ranching and farming between 1870 and 1920. Barbed wire and irrigation are two of the key technologies credited for population and agribusiness growth in the eleven county region (Texas State Historical Association, 2012).
Ruben E. Ochoa described a significant turning point in Medina County’s history with the arrival of the railroads and barbed wire. Barbed wire fencing provided for the introduction of improved breeds as well as the creation of new and improved feed crops. These feed crops provided a premium replacement for range forage, especially for more valuable livestock (Ochoa, 2012). Although free-range cattle ranching traces its demise following the introduction of barbed wire in the 1870s and 1880s, that did not equate to less ranching. In fact, La Salle County reported an exponential growth in cattle ranching and farming: the U.S. Census reported six farms or ranches in La Salle County in 1870 and 98 by 1890 (Leffler, 2012b).

Barbed wire fencing not only created a visual and physical restriction on the free movement of large-sized animals. One of its recognized benefits was the increased protection of farming crops that previously had been devoured by animals allowed to roam free. However, water was not readily available in all eleven counties in the late 1890’s. In 1875, the Texas Legislature pass legislation that offered a bonus of land to companies that would build irrigation systems (Ochoa, 2012). Irrigation of the Winter Garden Region of South Texas, with its extended growing season, promised new economic possibilities. The Winter Garden Region is an agricultural area located on the South Texas Plains centering on Dimmit, Frio, LaSalle and Zavala counties (Texas State Historical Association, 2012). Visionaries like Colonel J.S. Taylor took advantage, and in 1899 constructed a thirty-foot dam that crossed the Nueces River to provide irrigation for about 2,000 acres of farmland, exponentially increasing land values. Dimmit County land values rose from $1.80 an acre in 1900, to $24.60 in 1910, to over $40 per acre in 1920 (Leffler, 2012b).

The Winter Garden Region includes four of the eleven counties in the present state-assigned service area of Southwest Texas Junior College (LaSalle, Frio, Dimmit, and Zavala
Prior to irrigation efforts in the region, this area had short grasses and mesquite trees. The introduction of artesian wells and other irrigation efforts produced farms that grew onions, spinach, strawberries, and beets. The population would triple between 1900 and 1930 (Odintz, 2012). The region serviced by SWTJC thus has experienced economic change from raising animals in the late 1800s, to farming of vegetables until around the Great Depression. Today many of these same economic activities focusing on agribusiness still exist, as well as exploration for natural gas and oil.

Southwest Texas Junior College: Texas First Multi-County Community College

Southwest Texas Junior College holds the distinction of being the first public tri-county junior college under Texas’ 1947 enabling law (Tollefson, Garrett, & Ingram, 1999). SWTJC’s three county taxing district consists of Real, Uvalde, and Zavala, counties which together had a population of 29,965 in 1950. Uvalde County represented more than half of the tri-county’s population in 1950 at 16,015 or 53%. The College would build its first campus in Uvalde. Uvalde was the home to the Army Air Force Flying School at Garner Field during World War II. Garner Field was named for John Nance “Cactus Jack” Garner, the former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and two-term Vice President of the United States under Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-41).

This training base was deactivated as World War II ended, closing in July of 1945. Salvaging activities by the federal government included removing grass, trees, and shrubs eventually leaving nothing but the bare earth, the concrete runways, and several buildings. Local organizations took action to repurpose the military base, and the combined activities of the Commissioners’ Court of Uvalde, the Uvalde City Council, the senior and junior Chambers of
Commerce, and representatives from the other two counties eventually culminated into a mass meeting to demonstrate support for the creation of a new junior college (Nielsen & Gray, 1972).

The location possessed obvious potential to serve as a location for an institution of higher education. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation approved Garner Field as a site for the proposed junior college, and in 1946 valued the existing facilities at three-quarters of a million dollars. Following the 1947 state enabling law, petitions were circulated in the three counties requesting the Texas State Board of Education to authorize establishment of a tri-county junior college district. After State approval of the tri-county taxing district was granted, the citizens of Real, Uvalde, and Zavala counties decisively passed the creation of a new taxing district May 18, 1946. The City of Uvalde formally purchased the Garner Field property on September 13, 1946, and opened their doors on October 14, 1946.

Two books, *From Barracks to Bricks* and *From Bricks to the Border*, self-published by SWTJC in 1972 and 1996 respectively, chronicle Southwest Texas Junior College’s history from 1946 through 1996. Each covers a span of twenty-five years. The closing of Garner Field provided the impetus for SWTJC to begin providing higher education opportunities for its service region. The need for a college in the area was clear, as no public institution of higher education existed in the vast area of approximately 360 miles west of San Antonio and east of Alpine, and in the 350 miles between San Angelo to the north and Laredo to the south (Nielsen & Gray, 1972).

Nielsen and Gray documented the need for a regional college, explaining the hardships that living in rural America can impose. For example, high school graduates and adults could not leave the area to attend college due to the overwhelming levels of family responsibilities to work the land. The 1972 history of the college’s early years details the humble beginnings to transform
a military base into a modern hub for higher education. In 1946-47, SWTJC enrolled 69 students, 68 men and one woman. Twenty-five years later in 1970-71, SWTJC enrolled 2,962 students. By 1964, SWTJC had received accreditation from the Texas Education Agency and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In 1960, Uvalde County’s population was approximately 10,500.

A defining characteristic of Southwest Texas’ state assigned service area is the vast distances that the College’s faculty and staff, and student’s must overcome to provide access to higher education. For example, the distance between Uvalde, Texas and Del Rio is approximately 70 miles. The distance to Eagle Pass is approximately 70 miles as well. From Barracks to Bricks, covering 1946 to 1971, was replete with descriptions of the struggles associated with providing educational opportunities for the rural communities of southwest Texas. The second quarter-century of SWTJC’s history, from 1971-1996, is captured in From Bricks to the Border, written by Jane Knapik. This second college history pays tribute to the founders who imagined a future that included a community college for their region, and examines each of the presidencies, while offering a snapshot of the financial history and student populations served by SWTJC.

Jane Knapik credits enrollment growth at Del Rio to the formation of an Educational Committee, which would serve as a formal standing committee comprised of local citizens. In 1988, the Committee’s goal was to work together to provide more exposure in the Del Rio community about SWTJC. Del Rio is a city located in Val Verde County approximately one hundred fifty-two miles west of San Antonio. Val Verde County is out of the taxing district of SWTJC but within the service area of SWTJC. By 1994-95 the Ford Foundation arrived to a SWTJC comprised of a main campus in Uvalde with additional campuses in Del Rio and Eagles
pass and a center in Crystal City. By 1995-96, the fall enrollment at SWTJC’s Del Rio Campus was more than 800 students, with approximately 475 of those students taking day classes, a 105% increase over that of 1988 (Knapik, 1996, p. 51). College-wide, SWTJC enrolled 1,297 students in 1972, 25 years later in 1995, 3,257 were enrolled, an increase of 150%.

A key reason the leadership of SWTJC strongly supported participation in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative was the possibility to demonstrate its commitment and desire to further extend and improve access to higher education, and to act as a catalyst for economic development. Challenges in providing access to education in remote rural areas are entangled and dependent on the type of technologies available. In their 1995 RCCI Implementation Grant Proposal, SWTJC acknowledged a requirement for an “alternative delivery system” to overcome the educational access barriers. During that time frame, Texas A&M University was considering plans to create interactive technology for their Agricultural Extension Center in Uvalde, located less than one mile away from SWTJC (Southwest Texas Junior College, 1995). Participation in the RCCI had the potential to provide funding for SWTJC to provide students their first interactive distance learning environment.

The 1947 Texas enabling law permitted the formation of taxing districts for local community colleges. The taxing districts possessed the ability to levy local property owners in the form of an “ad-valorem” tax on property. Additionally, Senate Bill 390 passed by the 1995 Texas Legislature established community college service areas by assigning all 247 Texas counties to one of the 50 existing community college districts. The results of this legislation created an environment for Texas where community colleges labeled their prospective students as “in-district” or “out-of-district” students Texas community colleges are required to provide access to higher education to the state-assigned service area whether or not those districts chose
to levy an ad-valorem tax for the benefit of the college to deliver such services. Thus, Texas residents living inside an established taxing district are labeled as “in-district” and those residents living in the state-assigned service areas but outside the taxing district are labeled as “out-of-district.”

Here it is important to note that Texas’ 1947 enabling law did *not* assign each and every one of Texas’ 247 counties to a community college district. Rather, it *permitted* a county or group of counties a method and procedure by which to form new locally funded community college districts. It would take until 1996 before the Texas legislation formally assigned all 247 counties to community college districts. In 2010, only 18% of the 188,842 citizens living within the eleven counties of the legally designated service area of Southwest Texas Junior College actually lived in the taxing district. This taxing district is composed only of Real, Uvalde, and Zavala Counties, which in 2010 had a population of 41,391 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Table 2.1 shows the population of the United States, the State of Texas and the 11-counties served by SWTJC from 1990 to 2013. From 2000 to 2010 the 11-counties served by SWTJC shows a 9.7% increase in population. According to U.S. Census data, the increase of population for SWTJC service area exactly mirrors the population growth of the U.S. (9.7%) but is substantially lower than the total population growth of the State of Texas (20.6%). Over the same time period, SWTJC experienced a 53.3% increase in enrollment when juxtaposed on a 9.7% increase in population, this indicates pent up demand for underserved people to access post-secondary education.
Table 2.1


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>248,709,873</td>
<td>16,986,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>281,421,906</td>
<td>20,851,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>308,745,538</td>
<td>25,145,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>308,196,783</td>
<td>25,834,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 - 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau

SWTJC’s enrollment grew by 53.3% from 5,190 unduplicated headcount in 2000-01 to 7,958 in the 2009-10 academic year. Table 2.2 provides a longitudinal view of head count for each semester annually and a total unduplicated head count for each academic year from 1995-96 to 2014-15. The population growth rate continues to be dramatically exceeded by the College’s enrollment growth. The population of the counties serviced by SWTJC grew by 28.2% from 2000 to 2013 and the enrollment grew by 62.3%.
**Table 2.2**

*Comparison of Annual Duplicated and Unduplicated Headcount by Term 1999 to 2015 at Southwest Texas Junior College*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Headcount</th>
<th>95-96</th>
<th>96-97</th>
<th>97-98</th>
<th>98-99</th>
<th>99-00</th>
<th>00-01</th>
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<th>02-03</th>
<th>03-04</th>
<th>04-05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>3389</td>
<td>3333</td>
<td>3451</td>
<td>3526</td>
<td>3427</td>
<td>3716</td>
<td>3723</td>
<td>4326</td>
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<td>5140</td>
<td>5067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>3227</td>
<td>3176</td>
<td>3460</td>
<td>3468</td>
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<td>4351</td>
<td>4744</td>
<td>4929</td>
<td>4670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer I</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1017</td>
<td>1076</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>1322</td>
<td>1265</td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>1376</td>
<td>1493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer II</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>771</td>
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<td>790</td>
<td>751</td>
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<td>Academic Year Unduplicated Headcount</td>
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<td>5473</td>
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<th>08-09</th>
<th>09-10</th>
<th>10-11</th>
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<th>12-13</th>
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<th>14-15</th>
<th>20-year Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>4985</td>
<td>4875</td>
<td>4910</td>
<td>5767</td>
<td>6235</td>
<td>5664</td>
<td>5920</td>
<td>5410</td>
<td>5572</td>
<td>2183</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>4546</td>
<td>4486</td>
<td>4913</td>
<td>5756</td>
<td>5926</td>
<td>5294</td>
<td>5606</td>
<td>5133</td>
<td>5250</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer I</td>
<td>1678</td>
<td>1735</td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>1527</td>
<td>1545</td>
<td>1383</td>
<td>1501</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer II</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>1058</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>1071</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Year Unduplicated Headcount</td>
<td>6834</td>
<td>6659</td>
<td>7020</td>
<td>7958</td>
<td>8196</td>
<td>7404</td>
<td>7524</td>
<td>8425</td>
<td>7157</td>
<td>2497</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
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</table>

Data Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board CBM001 Reports.
Economic development provides a measure of the welfare of humans in society. Poverty provides a negative impact on the welfare and provides a measure for comparison. Figure 2.1 provides a poverty map of all counties in the United States in 2012 to illustrate the impact of poverty in Southwest Texas Junior College’s eleven county service area.

Figure 2.1

_U.S. Poverty by County 2012_

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Figure 2.2 illustrates and compares poverty trends of SWTJC’s service area to include in-district, in service area, but out-of-taxing district, Texas, and the U.S. population of all ages living in poverty. Poverty rates of SWTJC’s in-district population fell from 39.5% of all ages in poverty in 1990 to 29.2% by 2010 and down to 27% by 2013. SWTJC’s population that lived in their service area but outside of their taxing district were classified as living in poverty fell from 37.3% in 1990 to 29.5% by 2010 and down to 23.4% by 2013. The 2010 Census for the entire 11 county community college district shows that 8.3% of the population no longer lives in poverty (since 1990) there were discrepancies, however. Poverty for all ages decreased by 10.3% of those citizens living within the original three-county taxing district, and decreased by 7.8% for those citizens living outside of the taxing district of SWTJC (but residing within the “state-assigned” service area). These are important data points considering that from 1990 to 2010, the number of people living in poverty in the U.S. increased by 1.6%, from 13.5% in 1990 to 15.1% in 2010. As of 2013, the number of citizens living in poverty in the 11-county service area has reduced by 13.8%, from 37.8% in 1990 to 24% in 2013. There are approximately 12,159 individuals in Southwest Texas Junior College’s service area that no longer live in poverty. The same improvement in the human condition is not felt across the United States: the number of Americans living in poverty increased from 13.5% in 1990 to 15.8% in 2013. While significant strides have been made for the impoverished rural area serviced by SWTJC, Figure 2.2 shows the poverty rate of SWTJC’s service area remains roughly double that of the U.S. in 2013, but this was down from triple the national rate in 1990.
Figure 2.2

*Comparison of Poverty Trends for SWTJC Service Area (In-District and Out-of-District), Texas and U.S. during census years 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2013*

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Severely Persistent Poverty in Rural America

America has long been viewed as a place of unlimited opportunity to improve one’s financial well-being. The American entrepreneurial spirit has been exhibited by many immigrants who came to America extremely poor, and within a generation or two were no longer live in poverty. In fact, some have achieved wealth, however, there are parts of America where the American dream appears nonexistent, with little hope in sight. According to a 2002 report by Kathleen K. Miller and Thomas D. Rowley, on behalf of Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI), the prosperity of the 1990s significantly bypassed rural America.
The 2002 RUPRI Data Report (P2002-5) entitled “Rural Poverty and Rural-Urban Income Gaps: A Troubling Snapshot of the ‘Prosperous’ 1990’s,” analyzed data from the Economic Research Service, Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Census Bureau. Additionally, the report was designed to provide longitudinal data about rural and urban or metro and nonmetro counties at each decennial census survey from 1960 through 2000. The following is a summary of the findings:

- Of all counties with poverty rates above the national average rate, 1,610 are nonmetro, outnumbering metro almost 5 to 1.
- Of the 500 poorest counties, 459 are nonmetro, outnumbering metro 11 to 1.
- Of the 500 lowest per capita income counties, 481 are nonmetro, outnumbering metro 25 to 1.
- And of the 500 highest per capita income counties, only 150 are nonmetro, outnumbered by metro more than 2 to 1 (Miller & Rowley, 2002, p. 1).

Prior to the release of these data, the thought of people “living in poverty” might have conjured up images of large urban cities serviced by government housing, sometimes referred to as “urban ghettos.” However, when absorbing the aforementioned figures, it is easy to comprehend that 13.4 percent of rural Americans in 2000 lived in poverty, as compared to 10.8 percent of urban Americans. Rural poverty is clearly a significant problem.

The RCCI set its sights on improving the plight of people from the poorest regions of the United States. The first round of grants in 1994 encompassed community colleges in Appalachia, the Lower Mississippi Delta, the Texas Border, the Four Corners of the Southwest, and the High Plains of Montana and the Dakotas. These areas had poverty rates of at least 20 percent greater than the national average and in many cases the poverty rate was far higher (Kennamer &
Today, Southwest Texas Junior College provides educational service to eleven counties. During the census years of 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000, ten of the eleven counties were listed with poverty levels above 20%. The only county serviced by the College not listed in poverty from 1960 to 2000 was Medina (Miller & Rowley, 2002, p. 3). Additionally, Medina’s median income remains substantially higher than all other nearby counties. In 1990, Medina’s median income was $21,177 compared to the $14,713 average of the other 10 counties. In 2000, the median income was $35,723 compared to $24,708 average of the others. The same held true for 2010, where Medina’s median income was $47,099 compared to $30,844 average of the other counties. Medina shows an increase of 30% in median income over the other counties.

In 1965, the Texas Legislature established the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The Board was charged with assuring efficient and effective use of all resources to eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort regarding programs, buildings, and equipment, as well as the provisioning of adequate resources to fulfill the goals of postsecondary education (Tollefson, Garrett, & Ingram, 1999). Funds for Texas community colleges are derived from local property taxes, state appropriations, student tuition and fees, and the federal government. Local tax revenues are to supplement state appropriations for educational and general operations, as well as paying all the costs of physical plant operations and maintenance (Tollefson, Garrett, & Ingram, 1999, p. 412).

The funding model for Texas community colleges reflects, if not perpetuates, the dire living conditions in the rural southwest Texas region. Under current Texas law, local property taxes for community college operations are collected in only three of eleven counties in
SWTJC’s state-assigned service region. However, 20% of the population in 10 of the 11 counties has lived in poverty since 1960: in many cases up to 30 to 40% have been classified as living in poverty. Clearly, community colleges like SWTJC are not easily able to weather significant reductions in state funding or expand their physical plant because of the persistent poverty. The Texas policy for its 50 community college districts appears to reinforce and drive persistent poverty as its goal. If the answer to poverty is increased access to higher education, how will Texas rural communities break their cycle of poverty if the very entities that are taxed truly have no more to give? For example, Figure 2.3 shows that from 1994 to 2014 the property tax rate assessed increased by 225% from $0.04 per $1000 valuation to a rate of $0.13. For example, if the value of the property is $200,000 then in 1994 the assessed tax was $800. By 2010, that same property valuation assessed an annual tax of $2,600. From a monthly perspective, the property owners were taxed approximately $66.67 per month in 1994, however, by 2010 that monthly tax on the same valuation of property is $216.67 per month.

Building on the Failed Rural Development Strategies of the Past

Economic development strategies in the rural South prior to 1980s tended to focus on attracting agribusiness and manufacturing to their region. The primary attraction to the South prior to the 1980s was the abundance of low wage workers. In order to fulfill production requirements, many corporations transitioned to more mechanized manufacturing processes. The initial capital expense is large for companies due to the high cost of technology related to building a new mechanized production facility. Thus, well-trained workforce must be thoroughly considered by large manufacturing plants prior to building in the rural South. Corporations began to turn their focus away from rural South as suitable locations for their manufacturing plants because the requirements have changed from seeking a location with an abundance of low-wage
workers to now requiring proximity and accessibility to interstate transportation and access to a skilled workforce. Here, America’s 600 rural community and technical colleges have a special role to play, but are they sufficiently funded to do the job?

MDC created a panel to analyze materials related to rural economic development prior to Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the RCCI. The seven-member panel reviewed a variety of studies on the rural South and worked closely with the Southern Growth Policies Board. In order to humanize the research, the panel visited sites in rural Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, the Carolinas, and Tennessee. The panel produced a 16-page report entitled, *Shadows in the Sunbelt: Developing the Rural South in an Era of Economic Change.*

*Shadows in the Sunbelt* is a call to arms for the citizens living in the rural South to broaden their approach and perspective to economic development activities. The panel provided recommendations based on three critical findings:

1. The economy of the rural South is facing several negative trends simultaneously. Together these trends have serious long-term implications for the entire region.
2. Southern states’ traditional approach to economic development – industrial recruitment – is not likely to ameliorate the adverse trends facing rural communities.
3. There are alternative development strategies which can be implemented by state and local governments in the South to promote employment opportunities and economic growth, countering the adverse trends we see today. (MDC, 1986, p. 4)

The report provides a tale of two rural South communities, one is a prosperous community in the rural South, while simultaneously a neighboring community remains dormant. The communities of Hilton Head, South Carolina and Noxubee County, Mississippi are more than 550 miles apart but with similar cultural heritage; nonetheless, the economic development in
each location provides vastly different futures as one city dies and another thrives. For example, the tourist industry and retirement communities are the catalyst for economic development in Hilton Head, South Carolina (MDC, 1986). The trends noted in this report paint a grim future for those communities in the rural South that have no access to interstate highway systems and are located far from urban centers. Manufacturing plants that once provided generations of decent paying jobs that would in turn stoke the economic engine of communities in the rural South are now locating closer to urban centers that provide easy access to a skilled workforce and access to dependable interstate highways. Skilled workforce and dependable access to interstate highways are among the leading factors for a company’s decision to locate a manufacturing plant. The needs for a highly skilled workforce, access to transportation, and a higher “quality of life” – as reflected in education, health care, and cultural amenities – have become increasingly important (MDC, 1986, p. 7). The panel’s report determined that 73% of Southern interstate highways are rated as good in contrast to the 33% in the rural South. Road conditions provides a lens for “recruiters” to consider when attempting to attract large manufacturing companies to the rural South.

One top corporate recruiter was quoted in the report as he described the general preference for urban over rural locations this way:

There’s not a whole lot of magic in it. Would you locate a multimillion-dollar plant on a two-lane highway so that when a bridge is out, or a hog truck is ahead of your truck, your whole plant is left waiting for materials? The transportation requirement is critical, almost primary…You keep adding the factors. As industry needs change, you find companies are especially sensitive to the proximity of universities, because they certainly
want to be in a position to recruit people with skills in engineering, computer science, telecommunications, medical technology, and the list goes on and on. (MDC, 1986, p. 7)

Rural communities like many of those located in Southwest Texas Junior College’s eleven county state-assigned service area (16,712 square miles) are off the interstate highways and are not located in close proximity to a university. Many communities within SWTJC’s state-assigned service areas would likely not provide a suitable home for a large manufacturing plant to build. This explains why southwest Texas leaders search for alternative economic development strategies. The failed strategy of “landing a big one” as a means for economic development and higher employment rates no longer fits the rural South.

The panel’s report on economic development strategies for the rural South clearly shows that the counties in the South which have shown the fastest economic growth are those whose workers are best educated. As manufacturing jobs become fewer in number and are requiring higher skill levels for employment the rural South has to adjust its economic development activities away from a state-of-mind that focuses on “landing a big one.” The panel’s report provided a few examples of alternative economic development activities and give special note that the keys to success is for a local or regional organization to become involved with a cross-section of its citizen (MDC, 1986, pp. 12-13).

MDC’s understanding of the possible future of the rural South led to the development of a conceptual framework for the Rural Community College Initiative. The two-pronged approach for the RCCI was to expand access to higher educational opportunities and demonstrate that a regional entity (community colleges) are catalysts for economic development in their region. The focus was to provide a framework for expanding economic and educational opportunity in distressed rural areas. The first edition of the Conceptual Framework was written in 1994 and
was revised in 1996, and again in 1998. Alternative economic development strategies focus on building upon a region’s competitive advantages. Rural development experts that are looking to the future encourage communities to focus their efforts on their human resources and civic infrastructure (MDC, 2001). MDC provided a dichotomy of typical past and current approaches that aligned with approaches for the future. For example, a typical past approach to economic development might be heavily dependent on a natural resource base – agriculture, mineral extraction, and timber. An alternative approach for the future requires placing higher importance on intellectual, cultural, and civic resources for economic development. Another example of a past and current approach is the recruitment of industry by marketing cheap land, labor, and taxes (“landing the big one”). An alternative approach is enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of existing business and workers. Also, by providing help for new business start-ups and strengthening the foundation for development, especially civic infrastructure (MDC 2001, p. 9). The complete table of past and current approaches aligned with approaches for the future are found in Appendix C.

Like community college pioneer Raymond J. Young, Sarah Rubin (2001) echoed the belief that community colleges are considered “common ground” institutions and are respected by many sectors within and across their regions. The 25 Colleges participating in the Rural Community College Initiative needed to understand their role as regional leaders with a widely shared vision and commitment from key stakeholders. Their commitment to improving the quality of life for the whole region is a critical characteristic for rural community colleges. In Rubin’s (2001) “Community Colleges as Catalyst for Change” she references six key roles for economic development for rural community colleges. These key roles were used as a conceptual framework for the RCCI:
1. Mobilize regional leadership for economic development.
2. Be the center of a regional workforce development system attuned to employers’ changing needs.
3. Promote technology transfer and competitiveness.
4. Promote entrepreneurship and small business development.
5. Develop programs that target poor people while creating jobs.
6. Encourage a strong education ethic.

This framework of six key roles for economic development for rural community colleges is truly a divergent path when compared to economic development activities of the past (“landing the big one”). The alternate economic development framework centers on the vital role of rural community colleges becoming a catalyst for change. This change arrives in the form of access to higher education and place-based economic development activities that keep not only the money local but will also keep the educated from having to leave to find suitable employment. By utilizing the rural community college as catalyst for change, the Ford Foundation through the Rural Community College Initiative provided subject matter experts and tools that guided the pilot colleges, like SWTJC, through a formalized process to become a regional leader focused on economic prosperity for everyone in the region it serves.

RCCI’s Operating Philosophy: Vision to Action

MDC provided a framework in the form of a planning guide that included a nine-step process that aided colleges to “move from vision to action.” MDC’s Vision to Action Toolkit provided pilot RCCI colleges a process to encourage regional teams through strategic planning but reframed from labeling it strategic planning.
Step One of *Moving from Vision to Action* was comprised of two phases labeled as data collection and analysis. This step aided the institution in answering the question of, “where are we?” Primary focus of this step is to determine current state of regional economy and higher education access. The toolkit asked participants to collect both qualitative data and quantitative data about their respective regions and suggests these data elements are retrievable from a variety of sources, such as, regional economic development plans, grant applications, accreditation reports, school board data, and others (MDC 1998). Step One encourages the creation of two working groups, whereby one group will focus their efforts on data collection and the other group providing the analysis. The analysis groups were given instructions to complete a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis against data that was collected. A Step One worksheet, provided by MDC, assisted teams in the execution of their SWOT analysis and suggests removing duplicate findings in order to provide a summarized agreed upon SWOT analysis. SWOT is a model by which evaluation of both internal and external values are exposed. Strengths and weakness are considered internal to an organization and opportunity and threats are external to an organization. Those items that are defined as internal (strengths/weaknesses) are areas that the community college has the capacity to address such as hiring practices that have the potential to shape the minimum requirements for faculty qualifications. The external areas (opportunities/threats) are not as easily addressed as the community college has little administrative control or personal influence in these areas. As an example, when states reduce appropriations there is very little impact or influence that an individual community college has on those decisions. Despite these changing demographics, and finances over which they have little control, the goal at the conclusion of Step One is to help the college have enough data on hand to answer the principal question of: where are we?
Step Two involves describing the current situation to assist in answering the question: “What needs to change?” Step One’s completion was paramount in possessing the ability to execute Step Two. After the community college had defined current regional economic status and regional higher education access issues, they were armed and ready to tackle setting of goals. However, they are also challenged in prioritizing goals. MDC provided a worksheet that contains a two-column account of current situation (results from step one) on the left-side and a desired future situation to be accomplished within a five-year window right-side of the worksheet. Additional guidance from MDC was listed in the notes section, stating that the use of the “nominal group technique” may assist in facilitating decision-making for the group in setting priorities.

Step Three was visioning. Here the community college was challenged to create the ideal image of their futuristic community college to answer the question: “What should we be aiming for as a community or region?” Step Three required the dreamers to look out into the future as far as 10 to 15 years, asking what the community college will look like if their plans were successful, and then to create a vision statement confined to one or two written paragraphs. If done according to the workbook, the visioning process has the potential to build team cohesiveness through this creative visioning exercise. Step Three requests the creation of a vision in two forms. The first was a creative expression though the use of a collage, skit, drawing, song, or such. The second form would arrive as a one or two paragraph written vision statement. The product of Step Three was to paint a picture that interweaves values, hopes, and dreams that are important to both the rural community college and the region it serves.

Step Four was to set goals. These goals were the counterpart for the situation statements developed in Step Two. Goals, as described by the workbook, define the future in specific,
concrete, measurable terms. Creating these goals with the participating institution will provide the focus and vehicle to reach their vision. This step consists of two phases, to develop and then screen goals. When screening goals, the group was instructed to ask themselves questions based on five areas: vision, need, impact, equity, and collaboration. The workgroups were asked to narrow the goals to an achievable number and they were asked to revisit the “feasibility” question of: “given who we are, the resources we have, and the time that we have, do we as a team have the potential to achieve this goal?” (MDC 1998, p. 31) These goals would eventually provide the foundation needed to begin building a better future for all stakeholders.

Step Five provided a process for strategy development and those strategies should answer the question: how will they make their goals achievable? MDC’s workbook defined strategies as “specific programs, projects, or efforts that communities or organizations pursue to reach their goals” (p. 34). Strategies defined in this step could arrive as broad policies or very narrow and specific programs if needed. However, these strategies must address all of the required resources in order to complete them successfully. Those resources might include money, materials, and peoples time. Strategy development was categorized into three phases, Force Field Analysis, Research, and Strategy Selection. Force Field Analysis provided a technique for articulating and identifying all the forces for and against a strategy. Force Field Analysis helped to visualize and mold their discussions in determining methods to weaken the negative forces and to strengthen the positive forces to achieve their goals. Properly addressing results from the Force Field Analysis phase increased their likelihood of success. The second phase of strategy development was Strategy Analysis Research, where the group worked to evaluate strategies that were previously deployed at other institutions. In order not to spend an enormous amount of time developing strategies or reinventing yet another unsuccessful wheel, the group executed the
Strategy Analysis Research phase by taking each of the “forces” defined in the previous phase and began to develop strategic options. MDC suggested that either one person or a small group needed to investigate historic initiatives to look for the rationale for why they failed and to find any possible missed opportunities. This research was important in providing additional context that did lead to the final phase of strategic development of strategy selection. Strategy selection was further assisted in limiting or reducing the list of strategies that needed developing. The key in this step was to narrow the strategies in such a way that they were coherent around the institutions goals and that they progressively advance towards those goals. MDC advised at this step, not to settle on a strategic approach until they have been fully discussed (MDC p. 45).

Here is where the 11 RCCI pilot colleges and the MDC coaches each assigned to a pilot college benefitted greatly from the two institute meetings funded by Ford. Rural tribal and community colleges hosted these meetings, with seven to ten member teams traveling to hard-to-reach places like Ft. Peck, Montana, Carlsbad New Mexico, and Hazard Kentucky. This helped participants to realize they were not the only ones who owned problems associated with broken communities. The Ford Foundation deserves credit for recognizing the benefits associated with subsidizing the tremendous costs of travel and lodging to get seven to ten member teams from each pilot rural community college to fly to remote places for the RCCI institutes (Kennamer & Katsinas, 2011, p. 243).

Step Six of MDC’s Vision to Action Planning Guide provided a means to Analyze Stakeholder’s Influence. The results of step six would provide answers to the question of: What political/institutional factors should we consider? This step builds on the strategies developed in the previous step and then provides a worksheet to thoroughly discuss the influence of each stakeholder against the backdrop of each strategy. MDC cautions that high numbers in the “%
“Make It” are not the normal when introducing a new way of accomplishing goals. MDC’s workbook states, “If everyone wanted it to happen, it would have happened already!” Options for each group or person that has potential stake in the success of a particular strategy are placed on the worksheet and then the group had to assign percentage values for “% Stop It”, “% Let It”, “% Help It”, “% Make It”. The goal of Step Six is to tailor strategies and plans in such a manner that each group of stakeholders are moved to a more positive location within the worksheet.

Step Seven was to Plan for Funding and Sustainability, whereby the group would determine what the cost associated with their strategies. Another important consideration was who will pay for them in both the long-term and short-term? MDC’s workbook was clear that the RCCI was providing seed grant funding but the intent was not to continually fund the strategies/initiatives. RCCI’s goal was to assist in leveraging other financial and nonfinancial resources so Step Seven was to serve as a “reality check” geared towards sustainability. In previous steps, the group was encouraged to dream big but now was a time to sharpen their pencils and determine actual costs for their strategies. Those costs were to include specific costs for new programs, costs for staff to manage the RCCI, cost for staff development, costs for additional research and such. The worksheets provided a way to articulate those costs that could be paid by the RCCI grant or in-kind contributions, as well as, other sources. Two worksheets were provided by MDC for Step Seven and they emphasized a two-year and a long-term time period when planning the funding of each strategy/initiative.

Step Eight called for a Plan for Action. The worksheet for Step Eight visually tells the entire story, with a banner titled “Strategy:” followed by four columns that are labeled from left to right; What, Who, When and How/Notes. Here the responsibilities are well-defined and documented in such a way that a clear understanding is shared by all stakeholders. MDC
recommends keeping the “political” needs addressed in Step eight as a part of this plan for action. Step eight also provides a plan for how communication will occur about each of the strategies during their implementation.

Step Nine is the final step in MDC’s Vision to Action workbook. Step Nine assists the group to Plan an Evaluation. This step assists in answering the vitally important question of, “How will we know when we have achieved our goals?” Many evaluations typically occur at the end of implementation however; MDC encouraged this exercise at the beginning. The group was encouraged to identify possible intermediate benchmarks that might assist in determining if their course of actions were yielding their anticipated results. The group also determined “what” was to be measured and “who” would execute the evaluation. An ancillary tool of this final step includes the artifacts necessary to communicate their successes.
CHAPTER 3:
EXPANDING ACCESS

Introduction

A primary goal of the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) was to increase access to higher education in historically poor regions of the United States. Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) utilized a 1947 Texas enabling law to form the first tri-county taxing district that included the counties of Real, Uvalde, and Zavala. Prior to the SWTJC’s 1995 involvement with Ford Foundation’s RCCI, expanding access to higher education and training to the citizens of the tri-county area meant delivering services to an area of land that covers 3,561 square miles. The technology during the mid-1990s had not yet caught up with the demand to offer college-level classes at a distance. Compounding the obstacle of distance to providing access to higher education was, in fact, more distance. In 1995, the original service area for SWTJC was dramatically expanded by the Texas Legislature’s Senate Bill 390, which assigned eight additional counties to SWTJC’s service area. This expansion equated to an additional 13,151 square miles to provide services, as the resized new state-assigned service area now covers a vast land mass of 16,712 square miles.

This chapter will discuss the College’s journey to becoming a regional college by analyzing various key academic indicators such as fall semester unduplicated headcount, academic credit contact hours, technical credit contact hours and others. Educational partnerships are then examined to determine how the under-served are included in a regional context as well as the High School to College linkages. Additionally, this chapter will capture the insight from students and examine residence halls at community colleges.
Becoming a Regional College

The three counties authorized to create the SWTJC district are Real, Uvalde, and Zavala. The closing of Uvalde’s Garner Air Base in 1947 provided the initial home to SWTJC’s main campus. This brings up a major challenge in become the region’s community college: From its inception, SWTJC had been considered a College “in-Uvalde-for-Uvalde” – a perception that dates from the 1950s until the mid-1990s when SWTJC began its participation in the Ford Foundation’s RCCI (Thomas, 2005, p. 20). It is important to note that a regional mindset was beginning to blossom prior to SWTJC’s involvement with the RCCI, President Billy Word submitted a proposal in 1995 on behalf of SWTJC that would eventually be rejected because the President’s desire was to help the local Independent School Districts; and as such, he wanted all the money to go to the high school (C. Lincoln, personal communication, March 28, 2014). The southwest Texas region was in need of more than a bigger brother that would fight for them, they needed leaders from the community college to become active participants in the region’s future. Thus, the first proposal from SWTJC to the Ford Foundation was for a planning grant submitted on August 15, 1994 with the following statement embedded:

The purpose of the grant was to support the development of a regional model that allowed Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) to serve as a catalyst for economic development and improve access to postsecondary education for poor, minority, and other disadvantaged students (Southwest Texas Junior College, 1994).

The proposal for the planning grant from the Ford Foundation continues to describe the economy of SWTJC’s state-assigned service area as agricultural and noted that on every index of social and economic development ranks SWTJC as one of the most disadvantaged regions in the nation.
SWTJC’s final report for its Ford Foundation the Rural Community College Initiative Continuation Grant (#970-1167), was submitted on July 7, 2000. In it, the College describes the impact of $100,000 to educational access and economic development from June 1, 1997 to May 31, 2000. SWTJC reported four significant activities and strategies that helped lead the College toward becoming a regional College: (a) spearheading distance learning, (b) building partnerships with secondary schools, (c) spearheading a regional workforce development system, and (d) playing a key role in regional economic development planning. The continuation grant provided the expansion of the Business and Industry Office by hiring an additional employee, with subsequently over 4000 reportedly employees receiving training. One of the more critical systems to provide expanded opportunities for education was the distance learning system. The distance learning equipment was originally purchased ($40,000+) from SWTJC’s 1995 RCCI Implementation Grant for three interactive classrooms across SWTJC’s locations. By May of 2000, a new distance learning room was added in Uvalde, consuming $25,000 from the grant, bringing the total to 24 interactive classrooms. The final accomplishment noted in the report were the regional planning activities that led to designating the SWTJC region an “Enterprise Community Zone.” A few years later MDC, Inc., published a report that gathered accomplishments and lessons learned for the original pilot group, and noted SWTJC’s progress:

Through RCCI and the influence of team members representing business, government, and non-profit organizations, the college became more engaged with the community. The college president encouraged faculty and staff to participate in civic organizations, and he joined several community boards. Gradually, the college’s capacity and image changed, and eventually it took a leadership role in regional economic development, helping its
region win federal designation first as an Enterprise Community and then an Empowerment Zone. (MDC 2003, p. 12)

Katsinas’ 1994 preliminary report served to inform the Ford Foundation officials as to how best maximize the impact related to the involvement from SWTJC. He stated that for students seeking an opportunity to access, the American dream would require in some cases more than a two-hour car ride (Katsinas S. G., 1994). This distance in sparse rural areas, plagued with persistent poverty for several decades, begins to seem insurmountable for residents living in SWTJC’s service area. Authors Arthur M. Cohen and Florence Brawer captured this concern in the book, *The American Community College*, where they wrote that “for many students, the choice is not between community college and another institution, the choice is between a community college and nothing.” Figure 3.1 defines the region of 11 State-assigned counties that Southwest Texas Junior College must provide educational access.
Southwest Texas Junior College’s fall semester enrollment has demonstrated a steady climb from 1981 to 2013. Figure 3.2 “Southwest Texas Junior College Fall Semester Enrollment 1981-2010” represents timeframes of a decade prior to SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI and concludes with fall semester enrollment a decade after the RCCI program had ended. Fall semester unduplicated headcount in 1984 was 2,452 and by 1994 grew to 3,139 presenting an increase of 28%. Thomas (2005) documented a dramatic growth in fall semester enrollment from
1994 of 3,139 students to the 5,140 enrolled in 2004, representing a growth in enrollment of approximately 64%. The College’s fall semester enrollment continued to climb until it reached a peak of 6,235 in 2010. By 2010, enrollment had nearly doubled that of 1994 the year Southwest Texas Junior College began its “planning phase” for participation with the RCCI. Considering the pace of enrollment growth prior to participating in the RCCI, as well as the 10-year post participation, it is clear that SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI positively impacted enrollment. In fact, the College grew at a rate twice (28% versus 64%) as fast during and after participating in the RCCI, indicating a pent-up need for access to higher education across this region.

However, enrollment growth has slowed substantially since 2004 when Chris Thomas first wrote about the College’s 64% increase. Enrollment in 2004 fall semester was 5,140 students, and grew to 5,410 in the 2013 fall term an increase of 5%. The enrollment growth from 2004 to 2013 has dwindled considerably when compared to other timeframes in SWTJC’s history. The majority of the decreased enrollment was between 2010 and 2013, when fall enrollment declined by 13%.
Enrollment growth is an important measure of institutional impact towards achieving access to higher educational. Southwest Texas Junior College’s impact on unduplicated head count during the fall semester remains substantial on its own accord. Table 3.1, “Comparison of Fall Enrollment Trends for Southwest Texas Junior College, the State of Texas, and United States Public 2-year Community Colleges 1994, 2004, 2010, 2013 and 1994 to 2013” provides snapshots of fall semester enrollment of the year that SWTJC began participation with Ford.
Foundation’s RCCI via its planning grant. Enrollment for 2004 represents the time of Chris Thomas’s visits, followed by the decennial census year of 2010, and concludes with the most current data available at the writing of this case study is 2013.

Table 3.1


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>SWTJC</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>SWTJC</th>
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<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5,945,287</td>
<td>540,757</td>
<td>5,140</td>
<td>1,211,198</td>
<td>144,554</td>
<td>2,001</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>7,435,419</td>
<td>710,864</td>
<td>6,235</td>
<td>1,490,132</td>
<td>170,107</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>6,986,383</td>
<td>695,601</td>
<td>5,410</td>
<td>-449,036</td>
<td>-15,263</td>
<td>-825</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-2013</td>
<td>2,252,294</td>
<td>299,398</td>
<td>2,271</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: U.S. means Public 2-year Colleges, Degree Granting, Title IV eligible.

Data Source: SWTJC Institutional Research Department, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Query Prep System, and National Center for Education Statistics

Over a ten-year period from 1994 to 2004, two years after the RCCI activities had concluded, SWTJC experienced an increase in fall semester enrollment nearing 64%. During the same timeframe, 1994 to 2004, fall semester enrollment for community colleges across the United States increased by 5,945,287 or 25.6% U.S. students and the State of Texas enrollment in community colleges increased by 540,757 or 36.5%. SWTJC doubled the enrollment growth (60%), and nearly doubled that of Texas (43%). During the next timeframe, 2004 to 2010 the United States continued its pace of growth at 25.1% and the State of Texas saw growth of 31.5% as the previous timeframe. During the 2004 to 2010 period fall semester enrollment at SWTJC
grew by an additional 6,235 or 21.3% students. Overall, fall semester enrollment at SWTJC has kept pace with the state of Texas from 1994 to 2013, and both SWTJC and Texas have exponentially outpaced the United States. From 1994 to 2013, the fall semester enrollment for the United States grew by 47.6% which is a pace far below that of Texas (75.6%) and of Southwest Texas Junior College (72.3%).

SWJTC’s fall semester enrollment has slowed in recent years, particularly since the Great Recession. Fall semester enrollments for the United States, Texas, and Southwest Texas Junior College report significant decreases from 2010 to 2013 of -449,036 or -6%, -15,263 or -2.1%, and -825 or -13.2%, respectively. Unduplicated head count provides a tangible measure to gauge how many individual people the College is serving.

Credit contact hours offers another element to evaluate in determining an institutions effectiveness at providing access to higher education. Additionally, it is important to remember that community colleges in Texas receive state appropriation based on credit contact hours.

While many colleges boast about their total head count (attendance) Texas community colleges must remain focused on contact hours. State appropriations are largely based on total number of contact hours generated by the College. According to Tollefson, Garrett, & Ingram, the formula dollar amounts are revised by the coordinating board each year, based upon an annual study of community colleges expenditures that is conducted collaboratively with an advisory committee selected by the community colleges. Statewide median cost per contact hour for each of the program areas are used to determine the recommended formula rates. To receive funding in the formulas, all programs must be approved by the coordinating board. The formulas provide the basis for college budget requests. They do not generate community college entitlements to state appropriations, but they are used to
allocate the amount of money that the legislature does appropriate. State appropriations are disbursed to community colleges after coordinating board receipt of actual enrollments and contact hours, and reimbursements are restricted to base-year enrollments and appropriation figures (Tollefson, Garrett, & Ingram, 1999).

Community college funding is a shared responsibility by the State, local taxpayers, students, and the federal government and the State only provides funding for “instruction.” The responsibility of local taxpayers and the state are clearly defined in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s 1969 Master Plan. College districts are expected to use their ability to tax local entities and collect tuition from students to cover the cost of construction as well as the operations of the physical plants and maintenance of facilities. Increases in contact hours has a dual impact of providing a measurement for how the College is expanding access to education and the means to finance that expansion.

Table 3.2 “Enrollment Expressed in Contact Hours by Type of Programs at SWTJC from 1993-94 to 2012-13” describes the significant increases of all types of programs during the period in which the college was involved with the RCCI and several years to follow. Contact hours in the academic year of 1993-94, the year prior to participation in the RCCI, grew by 733,816 a 52% increase in contact hours during those eleven years. Total credit hours grew by another 210,864 or 10% from 2004-05 to 2009-10. The year 2009-10 saw a 15.6% uptick over 2008-09 of 325,136 total credit hours. Without the increase in total credit hours in 2009-10, SWTJC would have posted a decrease in contact hours of -114,272 through 2008-09. However, from the year prior to SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI 1993-94 through 2009-10 eight years after its participation ended the overall credit hours have increased by 1,011,144 or 72%. Total credit contact hours delivered at SWTJC for academic and technical programs have increased by
270,544 or 14% in the decade since the RCCI program ended. A majority of the increases in contact hours occurred during the three academic years of 2002-03, 2004-05, and 2009-10 showing double digit increase of 16.2%, 12.0%, and 15.6% respectively. These three years saw an increase of 819,904 credit contact hours compared to the 775,480 total increase of credit contact hours during SWTJC’s twenty-year journey.

Table 3.2

Enrollment Expressed in Contact Hours by Type of Programs at SWTJC from 1993-94 to 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Academic CHR</th>
<th>Technical CHR</th>
<th>Total CHR</th>
<th>1 Year (+/-)</th>
<th>1 Year % Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993/1994</td>
<td>1,009,856</td>
<td>389,576</td>
<td>1,399,432</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/1995</td>
<td><strong>1,041,264</strong></td>
<td><strong>420,631</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,461,895</strong></td>
<td><strong>62,463</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/1996</td>
<td>1,032,032</td>
<td>439,217</td>
<td>1,471,249</td>
<td>9,354</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/1997</td>
<td>1,047,120</td>
<td>449,112</td>
<td>1,496,232</td>
<td>24,983</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998</td>
<td>1,146,736</td>
<td>459,592</td>
<td>1,606,328</td>
<td>110,096</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999</td>
<td>1,148,080</td>
<td>444,144</td>
<td>1,592,224</td>
<td>-14,104</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>1,129,872</td>
<td>434,448</td>
<td>1,564,320</td>
<td>-27,904</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>1,202,096</td>
<td>373,328</td>
<td>1,575,424</td>
<td>11,104</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2001/2002</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,252,656</strong></td>
<td><strong>385,824</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,638,480</strong></td>
<td><strong>63,056</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>1,446,576</td>
<td>457,792</td>
<td>1,904,368</td>
<td>265,888</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>1,639,408</td>
<td>493,840</td>
<td>2,133,248</td>
<td>228,880</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/2005</td>
<td>1,728,992</td>
<td>470,720</td>
<td>2,199,712</td>
<td>66,464</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td>1,631,640</td>
<td>463,600</td>
<td>2,095,240</td>
<td>-104,472</td>
<td>-4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/2007</td>
<td>1,575,936</td>
<td>453,904</td>
<td>2,029,840</td>
<td>-65,400</td>
<td>-3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/2008</td>
<td>1,530,352</td>
<td>454,528</td>
<td>1,984,880</td>
<td>-44,960</td>
<td>-2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/2009</td>
<td>1,646,032</td>
<td>439,408</td>
<td>2,085,440</td>
<td>100,560</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/2010</td>
<td>1,889,904</td>
<td>520,672</td>
<td>2,410,576</td>
<td>325,136</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/2011</td>
<td>1,900,864</td>
<td>544,800</td>
<td>2,445,664</td>
<td>35,088</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/2012</td>
<td>1,666,048</td>
<td>497,392</td>
<td>2,163,440</td>
<td>-282,224</td>
<td>-11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/2013</td>
<td>1,687,040</td>
<td>487,872</td>
<td>2,174,912</td>
<td>11,472</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: SWTJC Institutional Research Department, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Query Prep System
Table 3.2 also shows a comparison between academic transfer and technical or vocational programs. Both programs experienced significant growth during the years of the College’s involvement with the RCCI, and moderate rates of growth in the years following. Academic contact hours grew by 629,552 or 62% from 1993-94 through the 2003-04 academic year. Since 2003-04 academic contact hours have increased moderately by 160,912 or 9.3%. Overall growth in academic programs credit contact hours since 1993, prior to the College’s participation in the RCCI, until 2010 has increased by 880,048 or 87%. Technical contact hours expanded by 104,264 or 27% from 1993 to 2004. The following five years saw an increase of 49,952 or 10.6%, for a total increase in technical contact hours of 131,096 or 34% from 1993-94 to 2009-10.

The increase in both academic and technical credit programs presented in Table 3.2 is critically important to those practitioners and policymakers familiar with the convolutions of community college finance in Texas. In the three academic years since 2010, contact hours fell by 213,824 or -11.2%. Technical program contact hours decreased by 56,928 or -10.4% from 2010 to 2013. Collectively, total program credit contact hours have decreased by 270,752 or -11%. Over the twenty years spanning from 1993 to 2013, however, Southwest Texas Junior College delivered an additional 775,480 academic and technical program credit contact hours representing an increase of 55%. SWTJC has not kept pace with the state of Texas’s ability to expand its capacity. The state of Texas experienced an 87% increase in credit contact hours from 1993 to 2013.

The RCCI believed that the technical (vocational) programs should increase over time. The technical programs did increase in overall contact hours delivered at SWTJC when compared with academic contact hours. However, when considering how much of the “pie”
technical credit programs consume compared to academic credit programs the trend was for a short period of time and has been on as steady decline through 2012-13. SWTJC’s total technical contact hours increased by 98,296 or 25.2% since 1993-94 the year prior to participating in the RCCI. The overall percentage of total hours when categorized by academic contact hours versus technical contact hours has decreased the technical contact hours from 27.8% in 1993-94 of the total credit contact hours to 22.4% of total credit contact hours in 2013. In 1993-94 academic credit hours represented 72.2% of the total contact hours and by 2013 that percentage had grown to 77.6% providing a growth of 5.4%. The percentage of total contact hours of technical programs has steadily fallen since its peak in 1996-97 at 30% of total credit contact hours to 22.4% of total credit contact hours in 2013.

Southwest Texas Junior College has exponentially increased access to higher education in the region it serves as demonstrated by the increase in credit contact hours from 1993 to 2013. Table 3.3 “Comparing Total SWTJC Contact Hours by Program to Total Texas Community College's Contact Hours by Program (1993-2004, 2005-2010, 2010-2013, and 1993-2013, ” is divided into four significant time periods relevant to this case study. The first period extends from 1993 to 2004 representing the year prior to SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI until a few years after the program completed and Chris Thomas’s 2005 dissertation concludes. The second period represents an additional five years after Thomas’s visit extending from 2005 to 2010. The third period of time represents the most current snapshot from the 2010 U.S. Census extending through the 2012-2013 academic year. The fourth period of time is from 1993 to 2013 providing an overall view from before participation in the RCCI to a decade post participation. Table 3.3 includes the total credit contact hours delivered by community colleges in the state of Texas
during those same time frames list above in order to provide context to the progress being made at Southwest Texas Junior College.

SWTJC has consistently demonstrated a higher rate of growth in contact hours when compared to the state of Texas. During 1993 to 2004, SWTJC doubled the rate of growth in contact hours for technical programs over Texas at 27% versus 12%. Academic programs also doubled their rate of growth with 62% increase at SWTJC and only 29% in Texas. Total growth from 1993 to 2004 for all contact hours represented 52% upsurge at SWTJC and only 22% rise for Texas. During the second time period of 2005 to 2010 there was some total contact hour growth at SWTJC (13%) and Texas (19%). However, Texas grew its academic programs by 30% effectively doubling that of SWTJC at 15%.
Table 3.3

Comparing Total SWTJC Contact Hours by Program to Total Texas Public Community College’s Contact Hours by Program (1993 to 2004, 2005 to 2010, 2010 to 2013, and 1993 to 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>SWTJC</td>
<td>Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>100,650,064</td>
<td>1,009,856</td>
<td>65,925,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>129,571,348</td>
<td>1,639,408</td>
<td>73,956,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>168,354,718</td>
<td>1,889,904</td>
<td>73,484,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>222,642,250</td>
<td>1,687,040</td>
<td>89,647,651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change, Year to Year by Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>SWTJC</td>
<td>Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>28,921,284</td>
<td>629,552</td>
<td>8,031,507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>38,783,370</td>
<td>250,496</td>
<td>-471,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 to 2013</td>
<td>121,992,186</td>
<td>677,184</td>
<td>23,722,488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change, Year to Year by Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>SWTJC</td>
<td>Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>-11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 to 2013</td>
<td>121%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: SWTJC Institutional Research Department, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Query Prep System

Technical programs reduced by 1% for Texas and grew by 5% at SWTJC. During the third time period of 2010 to 2013 Texas academic programs grew by 32% and decreased by 11% at SWTJC. Technical programs in Texas grew by 22% and decreased by .4% at SWTJC. These
dramatic decreases in both credit academic and credit technical contact hours requires further investigation as they are the stark opposite of what is occurring at the State level. It is the culmination of twenty years of data representing total credit contact hours that reveals the great work being accomplished at SWTJC. Interesting to see those academic contact hours for Texas has grown by 121.2% from 1993 to 2013 compared to only 36% growth in technical contact hours indicating a movement by Texas to become more academic program focused and not technical (vocational) program focused.

SWTJC’s system wide enrollment growth suggests an expansion to educational access in the region has occurred. Table 3.4 “Enrollment Expressed in Credit Contact Hours, In-Taxing District and Out-of-Taxing District but within State-Assigned Service Delivery Area at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1999-00 to 2013-14,” shows a total of 1,564,320 credit hours were generated system wide in the 1999-2000 academic year. By 2002-2003, that number had grown to 1,904,368, an increase of 21.7%. Additionally, during that same period of time, in-taxing district contact hours grew from 797,200 to 821,644 representing an increase of just 3% in-taxing district growth from 1999-2000 to 2002-2003. From 2002-2003 until 2009-2010 the in-taxing district credit contact hours grew from 821,664 credit hours to 849,728, a modest increase of 3.4%. These data point dispel the notion that as the College grows to become regional, the in-taxing district counties of Uvalde, Real, or Zavala counties would be underserved. Additionally, Table 3.4 shows a dramatic increase in the total credit contact hours for the citizens that SWTJC serves who live outside of the taxing district. From 1999-2000 to 2002-2003, the total out-of-district credit hours increased by 41% from 767,120 to 1,082,704. From 2002-2003 to 2009-2010, SWTJC out-of-taxing district credit contact hours grew by 1,476,064 representing an increase of 36%. The most compelling data documenting the emergence of SWTJC as a regional
institution is that out-of-tax district credit contact hours grew from 767,120 in 1999-2000 compared to 1,412,224 in 2009-2013. This is an increase of 84%. Additionally, in 2009-2010 the ratio of in-taxing-district to out-of-taxing district was 39% and 61% respectively. A majority of students that attend SWTJC do so from outside the taxing district this aligns well with the fact that 82% of the population in 2010 lives outside the SWTJC’s taxing district. These data strongly suggest that the College has been able to expand access to higher education and that fulfills one of the two key RCCI goals.
Table 3.4

Enrollment Expressed in Credit Contact Hours, In-Taxing District and Out-of-Taxing District but within State-Assigned Service Delivery Area at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1999-00 to 2013-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>1999/00</th>
<th>2000/01</th>
<th>2001/02</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-taxing district</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>384,224</td>
<td>377,232</td>
<td>351,152</td>
<td>368,624</td>
<td>417,728</td>
<td>416,576</td>
<td>389,419</td>
<td>360,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>357,520</td>
<td>348,480</td>
<td>334,288</td>
<td>379,696</td>
<td>402,800</td>
<td>370,856</td>
<td>339,101</td>
<td>310,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer I</td>
<td>33,520</td>
<td>29,104</td>
<td>51,312</td>
<td>49,936</td>
<td>50,048</td>
<td>42,528</td>
<td>32,712</td>
<td>47,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer II</td>
<td>21,936</td>
<td>17,120</td>
<td>32,432</td>
<td>23,408</td>
<td>23,440</td>
<td>24,624</td>
<td>18,432</td>
<td>24,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>797,200</td>
<td>771,936</td>
<td>769,184</td>
<td>821,664</td>
<td>894,016</td>
<td>854,624</td>
<td>779,664</td>
<td>744,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Out-of-taxing district |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| State assigned Service Area |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Fall          | 330,000 | 363,264 | 378,784 | 470,944 | 530,768 | 608,128 | 605,658 | 589,946 |
| Spring        | 366,288 | 362,336 | 385,712 | 477,584 | 559,216 | 597,984 | 558,550 | 539,535 |
| Summer I      | 39,136  | 50,368  | 67,216  | 80,480  | 90,176  | 94,656  | 107,736 | 114,000 |
| Summer II     | 31,696  | 27,520  | 37,584  | 53,696  | 59,072  | 44,320  | 43,632  | 41,846  |
| Total         | 767,120 | 803,488 | 869,296 | 1,082,704 | 1,239,232 | 1,345,088 | 1,315,576 | 1,285,327 |
|               | 49%     | 51%     | 53%     | 57%     | 58%     | 61%     | 63%     | 63%     |

| Grand Total   | 1,564,320 | 1,575,424 | 1,638,480 | 1,904,368 | 2,133,248 | 2,199,712 | 2,095,240 | 2,029,840 |
|               | 37%     | 37%     | 39%     | 38%     | 37%     | 36%     | 34%     |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-taxing district</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>349,216</td>
<td>354,800</td>
<td>425,632</td>
<td>457,888</td>
<td>392,256</td>
<td>388,208</td>
<td>336,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>310,128</td>
<td>346,288</td>
<td>412,160</td>
<td>408,464</td>
<td>355,392</td>
<td>312,240</td>
<td>302,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer I</td>
<td>47,904</td>
<td>41,440</td>
<td>57,008</td>
<td>48,160</td>
<td>44,480</td>
<td>70,752</td>
<td>32,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer II</td>
<td>28,432</td>
<td>36,368</td>
<td>39,712</td>
<td>28,624</td>
<td>25,264</td>
<td>19,200</td>
<td>20,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>758,680</td>
<td>778,896</td>
<td>934,512</td>
<td>943,136</td>
<td>817,392</td>
<td>790,400</td>
<td>691,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Out-of-taxing district |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| State assigned Service Area |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Fall          | 568,240 | 562,096 | 622,112 | 688,976 | 626,432 | 648,000 | 630,928 |
| Spring        | 508,336 | 573,040 | 652,160 | 673,088 | 599,840 | 616,576 | 583,840 |
| Summer I      | 123,008 | 108,336 | 136,928 | 113,728 | 98,576  | 95,264  | 93,168  |
| Summer II     | 49,616  | 63,072  | 64,864  | 54,816  | 46,176  | 52,384  | 48,992  |
| Total         | 1,249,200 | 1,306,544 | 1,476,064 | 1,530,608 | 1,371,024 | 1,412,224 | 1,356,928 |
|               | 63%     | 63%     | 61%     | 62%     | 63%     | 64%     | 66%     |

| Grand Total   | 1,984,880 | 2,085,440 | 2,410,576 | 2,473,744 | 2,188,416 | 2,202,624 | 2,048,320 |
|               | 63%     | 63%     | 61%     | 62%     | 63%     | 64%     | 66%     |

Data Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Query Prep System Serving the under-served and Educational Partnerships

As of the writing of the case study, access to higher education is not free. However, as the 2016 Presidential campaigns began to spin up and focus on current issues such as the economy,
education, healthcare, welfare and poverty, and government reform, United States President Barack Obama formally announced the White House’s increased efforts to make community college free for all Americans. The independent coalition is comprised of educators, foundations, college leaders, and business professionals that will be known as the College Promise Advisory Board. Jill Biden, former Wyoming Governor Jim Geringer, and Martha Kanter, a professor of higher education at New York University and former undersecretary of education. Kanter describes the focus of the Board as:

The predominant focus is that in the 21st century, a high school diploma is not enough for success in the economy and society. People need an education beyond high school. The board will lend its expertise to help communities understand that investing in people who want higher education is worth it (Smith A. A., 2015).

Robert Pedersen, a historian of the community college movement, discussed the competing viewpoints of the “advocates” and “critics” of two-year public college financing from early in America’s history. Pedersen (2005), notes that junior colleges early in America’s history were universally small, exclusive, and expensive (p. 15). Those descriptions are counter intuitive to the contemporary thoughts and expectations of a local two-year community college. Pedersen describes the obstacles to a tuition-free junior college are State’s interests:

As anyone directly familiar with the state legislative process will attest, a pragmatic self-interest, rather than ideology, shapes the actions of state legislatures. Legislative sessions are too brief and infrequent to enable legislative factions to achieve overtly ideological ends, and legislatures are bound by strict constitutional constraints that make the pursuit of expressly ideological ends, irrespective of cost, virtually impossible. Beyond their challenging constitutional responsibility to adopt bills to fund basic services and
elementary and secondary education, legislatures must, in forty-nine of the fifty states, also adopt a balanced operating budget. These two requirements alone prompt state legislators to resist any addition to the institutions receiving recurring state appropriations, for such an expansion only results in an additional claimant on already scarce state resources. Interest groups—from the disabled and dislocated workers to preschools and community colleges—may pursue the security of a line item in a state budget, but the legislative barriers to this goal are necessarily considerable, so that few petitioners succeed in achieving this objective no matter the soundness of their policy arguments (Pedersen, 2005, p. 10).

Policy makers at all levels of the government have a herculean task set before them as they attempt to provide a two-year college education free in the United States of America. The land of opportunity translates into the pursuit of happiness, or as some might say, the pursuit of the “American Dream.”

The American Dream is generally interpreted as the opportunity for a better and fuller life. The American Dream is meant to be inclusive of everyone that has a desire to achieve. Opportunities to improve one’s station in life are the bedrock of the American Dream. Everyone deserves the opportunity, based in part on their ability to be successful and reach full potential. According to the report from the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges entitled, “Reclaiming the American Dream – Community Colleges and the Nation’s Future,” the American Dream is in grave danger. The longstanding expectation that each generation will prosper beyond the previous generation simply may not occur for this current generation.

The generation of Americans now passing through middle age may not be able to make that promise to the next. The American Dream has stalled. Median income in the United
States stagnated between 1972 and 2000. Since 2000, median family income has declined by 7%. A child born poor in the United States today is more likely to remain poor than at any time in our history (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012).

The Commission believes there exists a direct and powerful connection between American prosperity and education. Costs related to attaining a college degree continue to increase over time. For students in rural America, the cost to attend college is burdened by the additional expenses related to transportation (car payments, insurance, routine maintenance, and fuel). For example, there is no public transportation available in most small rural communities. Imagine, as a resident living within the SWTJC service area that covers 16,712 square miles along the Texas and Mexico border, what the cost for gasoline might equate to monthly just to get back and forth to classes. Additional costs related to transportation, which are more likely to occur in rural communities, have the potential to place access to higher education just out of their reach. As an example, the United States Energy Information Administration list gasoline prices in 1994 at $1.09 per gallon and by 2008 the average gasoline price was $3.29. As a student, the costs of gas to simply get to a community college location more than doubled from 1994 to 2008 (202%).

Student Financial Aid

The cost to attend SWTJC in 1994, taking a “full-load” (12 semester hours) was $249, provided the student lived within SWTJC’s taxing district. Table 3.5 “Comparing Cost of Tuition and Federal Pell Grants at SWTJC from Financial Aid Year 1998-99 to 2015-16,” that by 2005, the same academic load cost $534, representing an increase of 114% in those eleven years. At the same time, Pell Grants in 1994 had a maximum of $2,300. By 2005, that increased to $4,050, a 76% increase during the eleven-year period. By 2010, an in-district student taking
12 semester hours at SWTJC was $822 in tuition a 54% increase since Fall 2005. The maximum Pell Grant rose to $5,350, an increase of $1,300 or 32% since 2005. By 2015, the same academic load for an in-district student was $1,035, representing a 26% increase since 2010. Again, maximum Pell Grant failed to keep pace with rising tuition cost, increasing by $380 from 2005 to $5,730 (7%). Over the past two decades, the cost for in-district tuition for a student enrolled for 12 semester hours has increased by 316% at SWTJC, while the maximum Pell Grant has increased at half the same rate, or 149%.

Opportunities to access to higher education for residents that live within SWTJC’s state-assigned service area, but are outside of the taxing district, are clearly different. The cost for attendance at SWTJC in 1994 for a student taking a “full-load” of 12 semester hours and living outside the taxing-district, was $321. By 2005, the same academic load cost $795, a 148% increase in eleven years. By 2010, a student taking 12 semester hours at SWTJC living outside the taxing-district was $1,236 a 55% increase since 2005. By 2015, the same academic load for student living outside the taxing-district was $1,671 representing a 35% increase since 2010. Over the past two decades, the cost for a student living outside the taxing-district but within the state-assigned service area to enroll for 12 semester hours has increased by 421% at SWTJC, while the maximum Pell Grant has increase at pace nearly three times slower (149%) than tuition. Federal financial aid programs are not keeping pace with the rising cost of tuition.

Table 3.5, shows that in the 18 years from 1998-99 to 2015-16, four years that saw zero dollar increases (2005-06, 2006-07, 2011-12, and 2012-13). Additionally, there were six years that saw year-to-year increases equal to or less than 4%. Over 18 years, maximum federal Pell Grants saw double digit increases in just three years: 2001-02 (14%), 2008-09 (10%), and 2009-10 (13%).
Table 3.5

Comparing Cost of Tuition and Federal Pell Grants at SWTJC from Financial Aid Year 1998-99 to 2015-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Aid Year</th>
<th>Non-Duplicated Recipient</th>
<th>Total Awarded</th>
<th>SWTJC (Average Pell)</th>
<th>Max Pell</th>
<th>Cost for 12 SCH In-District</th>
<th>Cost for 12 SCH Out-of-District</th>
<th>Increase “if” Out-of-District</th>
<th>Percent Adjusted “if” Out-of-District</th>
<th>Non-Resident Out-of-State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>2,181</td>
<td>$3,957,781.22</td>
<td>$1,815</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>$339</td>
<td>$435</td>
<td>$96</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>$891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>2,175</td>
<td>$4,056,637.31</td>
<td>$1,865</td>
<td>$3,125</td>
<td>$351</td>
<td>$447</td>
<td>$96</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>$891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>2,133</td>
<td>$4,231,270.77</td>
<td>$1,984</td>
<td>$3,300</td>
<td>$366</td>
<td>$468</td>
<td>$102</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>$906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>2,164</td>
<td>$4,836,471.35</td>
<td>$2,235</td>
<td>$3,750</td>
<td>$450</td>
<td>$552</td>
<td>$102</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>$906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>2,544</td>
<td>$6,010,882.61</td>
<td>$2,363</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>$510</td>
<td>$708</td>
<td>$198</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>$906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>2,961</td>
<td>$6,983,487.05</td>
<td>$2,358</td>
<td>$4,050</td>
<td>$510</td>
<td>$708</td>
<td>$198</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>$906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>3,177</td>
<td>$7,520,514.97</td>
<td>$2,367</td>
<td>$4,050</td>
<td>$534</td>
<td>$795</td>
<td>$261</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>$906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>2,991</td>
<td>$6,841,874.81</td>
<td>$2,287</td>
<td>$4,050</td>
<td>$546</td>
<td>$807</td>
<td>$261</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>$918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>2,528</td>
<td>$5,910,885.95</td>
<td>$2,338</td>
<td>$4,050</td>
<td>$690</td>
<td>$987</td>
<td>$297</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>$1,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>2,370</td>
<td>$5,854,354.39</td>
<td>$2,470</td>
<td>$4,310</td>
<td>$775</td>
<td>$1,129</td>
<td>$354</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>$1,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>2,632</td>
<td>$7,328,037.68</td>
<td>$2,784</td>
<td>$4,731</td>
<td>$775</td>
<td>$1,129</td>
<td>$354</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>$1,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>3,448</td>
<td>$11,570,408.95</td>
<td>$3,356</td>
<td>$5,350</td>
<td>$822</td>
<td>$1,236</td>
<td>$414</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>$1,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>3,786</td>
<td>$13,073,609.42</td>
<td>$3,453</td>
<td>$5,550</td>
<td>$858</td>
<td>$1,272</td>
<td>$414</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>$1,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>3,511</td>
<td>$11,594,458.10</td>
<td>$3,302</td>
<td>$5,550</td>
<td>$975</td>
<td>$1,557</td>
<td>$582</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>$1,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>3,390</td>
<td>$11,441,164.26</td>
<td>$3,375</td>
<td>$5,550</td>
<td>$975</td>
<td>$1,557</td>
<td>$582</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>$1,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>3,096</td>
<td>$10,299,445.76</td>
<td>$3,327</td>
<td>$5,550</td>
<td>$1,035</td>
<td>$1,671</td>
<td>$636</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>$2,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>3,253</td>
<td>$10,532,672.68</td>
<td>$3,238</td>
<td>$5,730</td>
<td>$1,035</td>
<td>$1,671</td>
<td>$636</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>$2,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>2,720</td>
<td>$7,993,239.97</td>
<td>$2,939</td>
<td>$5,775</td>
<td>$1,035</td>
<td>$1,671</td>
<td>$636</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>$2,031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, SWTJC Institutional Research, and SWTJC Financial Audits (Supplement 4)

One of the contributing factors to the 13% increase in the 2009-10 award year was additional funding by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The 2009-2010 “Dear Colleague Letter” (DCL ID: P-09-01) explains the Presidential action:

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-5) that included an appropriated amount for the Federal Pell Grant Program to establish the maximum Federal Pell Grant award for the 2009-2010 award year at $4,860. Recall that the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) (P.L. 110-84) provides for an automatic increase to the appropriated Federal Pell Grant Maximum award for the 2009-2010 award year of $490 for students enrolled...
full-time. For student’s enrolled less-than-full-time, the increase is ratably reduced according to the student’s enrollment status. The CCRAA does not extend the maximum Federal Pell Grant eligible EFC beyond the EFC that was determined by the relevant appropriations of – 4617 for the 2009-2010 award year. As noted, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides for a $4,860 Federal Pell Grant maximum award for the 2009-2010 award year, which is increased by $490 under the provisions of the CCRAA, resulting in a 2009-2010 maximum Federal Pell Grant of $5,350. (Manning, 2009)

During the academic year of 2009-10, Southwest Texas Junior College experienced a major uptick in major categories: fall enrollment, unduplicated headcount, and semester contact hours. Keep in mind that the maximum Federal Pell Grant increased by 13% in 2009-10 over the previous year. Additionally, the average Federal Pell Grant received in 2009-10 was $3,356 an increase of $571 or 21% annually per student over the previous year. In 2009-10, the amount of Federal Pell monies entering the SWTJC region increased by $4,242,371 or 58%, providing an additional 816 students the ability to attend college. Fall 2009 semester enrollment at SWTJC increased by 17.5% (highest in 32 years) and unduplicated headcount (number of individuals served) increased by 13.4% in 2009-10 from the previous academic year achieving the second highest in 21 years. The final category, semester contact hour, is extremely important to the funding for community colleges in the state of Texas focus. Semester contact hours at SWTJC increased in 2009-10 by 325,136, or 15.6%, over the previous year reaching the second highest increase in 21 years from 1993-94 to 2013-14. In-depth analysis of these data points over multiple decades tends to show that when more money is available to the students in this southern rural community, the more students that will reach for the American Dream college
provides. However, the competing shifts in the value of the Federal Pell Grant and the dramatic increases in tuition and fees will force many disadvantaged students to choose between taking out student loans (if they qualify) and giving up hope that they will participate in the American Dream.

Federal Pell Grants to attend higher education institutions remain an important tool to assist those in persistently poor regions of the United States. Table 3.6 “Financial Aid at SWTJC in 1994, 2005, 2010, and 2014, shows four time periods over 20-years of financial aid at SWTJC. The number of Pell grants awarded at SWTJC continues to expand over time, from 1,100 awarded in 1994 to students attending SWTJC. By 2005, the College was able to increase the number of student receiving a Pell Grant by 189% (3,177). In 2010, SWTJC was able to award 3,786 Pell Grants adding another 609 students when compared to 2005, and demonstrating an increase of 244% since 1994. SWTJC was unable to award the same numbers of student in the financial aid award year of 2013-14 at 3,253 representing a decline in recipients of 14%. The College has been able to nearly double (195.7%) the number of Pell Grant recipients from the year prior to participating in the RCCI (1994) to over a decade after the RCCI program had ended (2014). The Financial Aid Department at SWTJC also works with the federal government to award the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG).
Table 3.6


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pell #</th>
<th>Annual Dollars</th>
<th>SOG #</th>
<th>Annual Dollars</th>
<th>College Work Study #</th>
<th>Annual Dollars</th>
<th>Texas Grant #</th>
<th>Annual Dollars</th>
<th>Stanford Loans #</th>
<th>Annual Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>$160,189</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3,177</td>
<td>$7,520,515</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>$218,750</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>$288,086</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>$1,017,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>3,786</td>
<td>$13,073,609</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>$233,536</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>$268,530</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>$631,010</td>
<td>1,035</td>
<td>$3,134,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3,253</td>
<td>$10,530,524</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>$596,910</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>$151,200</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>$140,462</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>$2,003,586</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NA = Not Available

Data Source: SWTJC Financial Aid and Institutional Research

The FSEOG Program is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as a needs-based grant to assist low-income undergraduate students cover the cost to attend college. Only 3,800 postsecondary institutions participate in the FSEOG program, whereby institutions must give priority to students that demonstrate an “exceptional need.” For example, a student with the lowest Expected Family Contribution (EFC), and eligibility to receive a Federal Pell Grant at the institution receive a priority disbursement of FSEOG program funds. Southwest Texas Junior College awards of the FSEOG increased by 120% from 1994 to 2005 (160 to 352). The total number of FSEOG awards decreased from 2005 to 2010 by -25% awarding 264. A negative number for this award type might be interpreted as either a good indicator or a bad indicator. Are less people eligible for this “exceptional need” grant and is that a good thing? Or are there fewer individuals attempting to pursue a higher education? By 2014, SWTJC experienced another increase in the number of students awarded the FSEOG of 157% since 2010 with a total of 678. Overall, in the twenty years spanning from 1993-94 to 2013-14, the College is awarding 324% more in FSEOG grants. The Pell Grant and the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity

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Grant Program provides money to needy students with no requirement for repayment. The federal government also assists institutions with federal dollars to employee students in a part-time capacity.

The Department of Education provides a Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program to allow the part-time employment of financially needy students to help finance their higher education. Only 3,400 postsecondary institutions participate in the FWS program. The hourly wages earned by these students must not be less than the federal minimum wage. Institutions are tasked to allocate 7% of FWS funding on jobs that directly support students working as reading tutors, mathematic tutors, literacy tutors, or emergency preparedness and response. Total Federal Work Study monies awarded to SWTJC students increased by 37% from 1994 to 2005, from $160,189 to $218,750. By 2010, the College received an additional $49,780 totaling $268,530. Unfortunately, by 2014, total funding from FWS fell to $151,200, a cut of -44%, nearly half the funding level of 2010, and a decrease of 6% compared to 1994 levels of $160,189. The Federal Work Study provides an innovative way to leverage assistance for the institution in form of student tutors while simultaneously allowing a student to work for their federal dollars, but clearly, funding has fluctuated and so has opportunities for the needy SWTJC students.

Financial assistance for needy students is not the sole responsibility of the federal government. Many states within the U.S. tend to shy away from federal money because of all the additional strings that are attached to the funding. In 1999, the Texas Legislature established the TEXAS (Towards EXcellence, Access and Success) Grant to make sure the well-prepared Texas high school graduate, with demonstrated financial need could go to college. This study examines data from 1994, in order to get a snapshot of SWTJC prior to participating in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative. The TEXAS Grant did not exist in 1994. It is,
however, currently providing Texans with grant opportunities. Thomas (2005) noted that 257 of these grants were received by students attending SWTJC in 2004-05 with a total value of $288,086. By 2010 there were an additional 153 students that received the TEXAS Grant, for a total of 410 students, equating to a value of $631,010. Effectively more than doubling the amount of money received at SWTJC from the State of Texas since 2005. That trend of exponential growth in grant funding from the State collapsed by 2013-14 when only 127 students received TEXAS Grant monies representing a decline of 77.7% since 2010 and a decline of 51.2% since 2004-05.

One of the more unique and creative attempts to help extend access to higher education was the creation of the Pioneer Loan Program. The program was started thirty years ago as a mechanism to forgive the tuition and fees of SWTJC students, to help cover the gap between the start of the semester and the time that their student financial aid money arrives (Thomas, 2005, p. 74). The loan is repaid when the student’s federal financial aid award arrives. The College started with a fund balance of about $60,000 and quickly ran into the red by nearly the same amount. Thomas (2005) noted that College officials continue to support the Pioneer Loan Program and are now more selective in the situations where it applied. Financial aid records begin to document the Pioneer Loan Program in 2008-09 noting 14 students receiving a total of $15,550. In 2010, only 12 students received assistance through the Pioneer Loan Program totaling $15,900. That number increased to 39 students in 2015, totaling $39,650. As federal and state budgets dwindle, the priority for educating the citizenry appears to have a low priority forcing students to seek loans that must be repaid as opposed to receiving grants that do not require repayment.
Many students, like the author, must apply for a loan if there is any hope to attend college. The U.S. Department of Education offers eligible students the Direct Subsidized Loan and Direct Unsubsidized Loan to help cover the cost of higher education at a four-year college or university, community college, or trade, career, or technical school. The primary differentiator in the two loans is when and how the interest related to the loan is paid. In 1994, there were 150 Stafford Loans awarded equaling $250,000 by 2005 that number had grown to 464 students who incurred debt of $1,017,249 a 306.9% increase. In 2005, 464 SWTJC students received loans; by 2010 that number grew to 1,035 and increase of 123%. Total value of Stafford Loans received by SWTJC students in 2010 was $3,134,999, more than doubling the debt incurred just five years prior. Students receiving the Stafford student loans decreased by 32% by 2014 (705) when compared to 2010 (1,035). Additionally, the total dollars passing through the College dropped to $2,003,586 a -36.1% decrease. From 1994 to 2010, there were 590% more students receiving the Stafford student loan and when extended to include 2014 the increase remains large at 370% for the twenty-year period. Close inspection of the data indicates that the U.S. Department of Education is more willing to invest in educating Texas residents than is the State itself.

High School to College Linkages

Southwest Texas Junior College’s focus on becoming a regional institution is evidenced by the College’s first request found in section two of their August 15, 1994 RCCI planning grant, “Southwest Texas Regional Model for Educational Access and Economic Development Planning Project.” The College first sought to create collaborative partnerships with Sul Ross State University and Texas A & M to build a two-way interactive video system capable of providing learning opportunities at a distance. SWTJC planned to connect their facilities in Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde to the each other and to the Internet (p. 12). The Internet was only five years
old in 1994 and considered the early years for distance education with few if any “Internet” delivered courses. SWTJC’s desire to expand institutional capacity by means of a connected ecosystem providing connectivity to community locations to support the delivery of education classes as well as videoconferences (MDC, 2002a). The RCCI provided access to seed money in order to,

“…provided resources and learning experiences that expanded institutional capacity, including: seed funding for a distance education coordinator; exposure to cutting-edge programs through field trips; flexible funding for staff development; and on-site technical assistance. (p. 10)”

Today, that initial interconnectivity provides online instruction and distance education to the twenty-two independent school districts located in SWTJC’s state-assigned service area. One of the primary functions of the two-way interactive video system was to provide high school students the ability to take college level course while still attending high school. Thomas (2005) noted that SWTnet fostered the continued development of “two plus two” programs for the area high schools that experienced a 3,000% increase in Internet delivered courses from 1994 to 2004 (p. 76).

SWTJC’s two-way interactive video network provides a vehicle to deliver classes to each to the high school locations to deliver “dual credit” courses. As one of the key RCCI goals to provide access to higher education, the video network created to connect the 22 school districts is providing access to student prior to graduation from high school. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) lists a few possible advantages to dual credit students as; increases likelihood will complete high school, will enroll in and persist in college, accelerate
time to degree, and entering the workforce sooner as positive outcomes to encourage student to pursue an education beyond high school. The Coordinating Board defines dual credit as “…a process by which a high school junior or senior enrolls in a college course and receives simultaneous academic credit for the course from both the college and the high school. While dual credit courses are often taught on the secondary school campus to high school students only, a high school student can also take a course on the college campus and receive both high school and college credit. Dual credit courses include both academic courses as well as technical courses. These courses are stepping stones from high school to college serving as a path to academic degree programs or college-level workforce education courses (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015).

The two-by-two program and dual credit enrollment from the 22 independent school districts have contributed to expanding access in the SWTJC region as well as increased enrollment for the College.

Enrollment at SWTJC continues to experience increases in the number of individuals served at the 22 high school locations. In 2000, unduplicated headcount taking classes by means of the internet or locations other than the main campuses accounted for 7.4% of student headcount. By 2004 during Thomas’s visit to SWTJC the percentage of individuals taking class away from the main campuses rose to 12.9% of student headcount. The total percentage of unduplicated headcount taking classes either by Internet or away from the main campuses have tripled by 2015 equating to 21.1%. Not surprisingly, total unduplicated headcount for students taking classes by means of the Internet have erupted from 56 in 2000-01 to 936 individual in 2014-15 representing a 1571% increase in the individuals taking course “on-line.” The vision and investment made by SWTJC leaders and the Ford Foundation’s RCCI program provided the
ground work that led to advent of distance education in the southwest Texas region in the mid-1990.

SWTJC Student Voices

Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation with the Rural Community College Initiative focused on providing access to higher education within their region. The vast open area of the rural south presents several uniquely rural issues when attempting to provide access to higher education. Only testimony from those individual students that have been on the receiving end of gaining access to higher education has the power to provide a true glimpse into their lives. The fact that the SWTJC’s service area is greater than 16,000 square miles creates spatial burdens on the students and on the community college. The researcher was able to meet with seventeen students from four campus locations within the vast SWTJC service area. Eight students were interviewed at the Uvalde campus on April 13, 2016 and April 19, 2016. Three students attending the Crystal City campus were interviewed on April 21, 2016. Lastly, a final trip was made to the Del Rio campus on August 9, 2016 to complete interviews with three students at that location. The gender makeup of the group is nine males and eight females. The researcher selected four student stories that provide an up close examination of their journey.

Every student interviewed reported their family was extremely proud and supportive of their academic journey. Every student interviewed possessed a clear vision of their future, at least for the next few years in that they were at SWTJC to get their core classes completed and transfer to a University. These students appeared to be well prepared for college, as indicated by the fact that a majority enrolled via dual credit respective high schools. Most believed that if SWTJC did not have a location close to them, that they would not be able to attend college, as most indicted their attendance was predicated on physical proximity to the College. When the
students were asked why they chose to attend it was the proximity to home and the cost of attendance, “…so, yeah affordability, proximity, and just kind of ease of transition into it (Evans, 2016).” Every student interviewed discussed how important it was to learn how to manage their time and the fact that they not only needed to mature but in fact they were maturing. Interestingly, some of the students had arrived in the SWTJC service area by means of their parents having a business such as a Taco Shop or a Magician (street performer) and about 30% did not understand how college was being financed.

Ryan Alldritt aspires to be a professor at SWTJC in the future. He is currently a tutor at the Uvalde Campus, TRIO participant, and the president of local Phi Beta Kappa’s chapter. He is pursuing his Associate of Arts in General Studies degree at SWTJC. He plans to pursue his bachelor’s and master’s degree after SWTJC and will become the first person in his family to finish college. His mother attended but did not finish, and during his father’s attempt to complete college he experienced a couple of stress-induced strokes. A native of Natalia, Texas, population below 1,500, Ryan’s choice of which SWTJC campus to attend was determined by the location closest to his parents’ home, “… it’s far enough away to give me my independence but not so far away that I can’t get help I need from my parents if absolutely needed (Alldritt, 2016).” Ryan was introduced to SWTJC as a dual credit student in high school and was pleased with the community college. Ryan considers himself as being independent and a loner. Interviewed on April 19, 2016 at the Uvalde campus.

Ryan lives in the College’s male residence hall. During the researcher’s visit to the Uvalde Campus the facilities were being updated. Ryan commented that he enjoyed the facilities and that the personnel were great, but he was not as complementary about the other students living in the resident hall. He complained that his fellow students were loud and disrespectful at
all hours. When confronted with the idea of what he would do if SWTJC did not exist, Ryan indicated that he most likely could not have afforded his next choice of college Baylor University where tuition and fees in 2014-2015 were $38,120.

Ryan’s reports his family is excited and supportive of his academic journey. He believes that his friends have a firm understanding of what he is experiencing while in college, both the good and the bad. Ryan feels that he has grown apart from some of his previous friends in high school due to distance and academic focus. He also thinks that his family might not fully understand the struggles he faces today compared to what they faced 20 plus years ago. He giggled as he explained it this way . . . “No one truly understands unless they have taken Dr. Burchfield’s calculus class, he is brilliant!” (Alldritt, 2016)

Augustin Valle interviewed on April 20, 2016 at the Eagle Pass Campus, grew up in Mexico. He finished high school there at the age of 17, and two years later is now a U.S. citizen, drawn to the U.S. for its educational opportunities. He is enrolled in SWTJC’s STEM program with a focus on engineering. Augustin is excited about some of the projects he works on in class. In one class, students are developing a full ecosystem related to food and how to have each of those areas provide resources for and to the other. His example described the planting and harvesting of vegetables in such a way that when the farmer waters the plants it feeds the fish at the same time, providing both vegetables and fish to eat. Augustin can attend college because of the Federal Pell Grant. He noted that the Pell has been sufficient to cover the direct costs of attending college. There have been a few other grants that Augustin has received based on the program or organizations that he participates in. Interestingly, he did not pursue those grants, rather the faculty or College reached out to Augustin to apply.
The biggest obstacle for Augustin after beginning college was the English language. For Augustin, English is his second language, but he reports having a great resource in his father, an English teacher. He believes his family and friends are very proud of his academic goals. Both his family and friends have a “college going” culture and he was expected to attend college whether in Mexico or Texas. Several of his family and friends suggested that he attend SWTJC in Eagle Pass because they had family and friends that attended and then progressed to UTSA. Augustin explained, “…then I came over here for opportunities…and I found them!” Augustin is particularly excited about the opportunities “America” has to offer but misses the time spent with his family. His mom and dad are still in Mexico, along with many other family members and friends: “distance has created a difference in their relationship.” Augustin considers SWTJC has an excellent college and if it did not exist he believes he would still be chasing his academic dream, but due to cost, it would most likely be in Mexico. (Valle, 2016)

Cynthia Crabtree was interviewed on April 20, 2016 at the Eagle Pass Campus. She was completing her final semester at SWTJC during the time of her interview. She will graduate with an Associate’s in Science in General Studies. Cynthia’s plan is to attend Angelo State University to complete her 4-year degree, with plans to complete her master’s degree. She is the first to attend college on her father’s side of the family. Her dad was excited that she finished high school but, “…when I decided to continue on to college, he was super-pumped.” Cynthia has lived in the area her whole life. Her parent’s missionary work is across the Texas border in Piedras Negras a city of 150,178 people right across the Rio Grande river from Eagle Pass. SWTJC was her college of choice, determined by distance from home and finances. Cynthia was clear that if SWTJC did not exist, she would most likely not have an opportunity to earn a degree. She has been able to finance her education with grants and scholarships, and has no
intentions on taking loans: “… I believe in keeping my GPA high to receive those scholarships, instead of slacking off and having to pay out-of-pocket or to get loans (Crabtree, 2016).”

Cynthia’s reports her family and friends are supportive of her academic goals. Her relationship with her old friends has matured over time and improved. Cynthia commented that the biggest thing that has changed during her college journey is how important time management has become. She complains she does not get to spend as much time with her friends like she did before attending college. She took the time to describe an instance that created a potential obstacle to completing college. During the previous spring semester, her mom was diagnosed with acute pancreatitis, eventually leading to hospitalization. She understood that her mom could potentially die if she did not receive the right type of care. “It was very hard…. It was… well… yeah, what I had to do was I had to keep my schoolwork and my family issues, not completely separated, but I couldn’t involve them too much. I simply had to keep working on my school activities (Crabtree, 2016).”

Attempting to keep school work and regular family life separated was difficult. Cynthia stated, “I just kept doing my assignments, like I said, trying to keep school and personal life not separated, but having to balance them (Crabtree, 2016).” Cynthia learned quickly that time management was her best tool for success,

I learned to manage my time very well like having to drive back and forth school, and taking my brothers to school, while my mom’s in the hospital, taking care of my little brother, making lunch for everybody, cleaning the house, and then doing assignments, and studying for tests and all that. I tried not to set any of that as an excuse as to why I couldn’t show up to class or not do an assignment. I just set my mind to doing it.

(Crabtree, 2016)
Laura Guerrero was interviewed on April 21, 2016 she was a student attending SWTJC’s Crystal City’s Campus. Her goal is to be accepted to the LVN program in fall of 2016; however, there are a few things that she needs to work out. Laura is the oldest of three girls, and lives with her mother and father. Her mom is a stay-at-home mom, and her father is a nurse. Laura mentioned the added pressure she feels by being the oldest sibling with substantial pressure to do well in school. She says she set the bar high by completing dual credit classes while in high school. Unfortunately for Laura, the nursing program is not offered in Crystal City but only at SWTJC’s three larger campuses at Uvalde, Eagle Pass, and Del Rio. Laura’s family owns just one car. The family will need another car to allow Laura the ability to drive the 80-mile round-trip every day she needs to attend classes. Laura indicated that she had gotten close to saving enough money to purchase a car: “… I work here at the college, so saving up so I can get my own vehicle, so I can travel to Uvalde, for when I take classes, but monthly bills got in the way (Guerrero, 2016).” Laura understands the additional burdens that happens when a student leaves home to attend college. The only year that Laura has lived outside of Crystal City was the year she attended Texas A&M in Corpus Christi. Higher tuition, room and board, and other costs associated with attending a state university became too much of a financial burden for her family. Accordingly, she was forced to move back home.

Laura wants to parlay pursuit of her LVN certification into an RN. It was not a difficult leap to assume that Laura wanted to follow in her father’s footsteps. However, Laura has a sister with special needs, and she wants to earn her RN in part to obtain additional specialties within the RN field that would allow her to better understand and assist her sister:

Well, once I get my LVN, I plan on moving to wherever there’s a good hospital, that’ll take me. Because, LVN’s are not in that much demand, I want to go back for RN, but do
LVN, and work in the emergency room for a couple years. Because, if I go back for RN, I’m more likely to get hired, with background experience. So, that’s my plan, I want to work my way up in to the RN, where I can help my little sister. I want to work with special needs kids, and as an RN, you do that type of work. So that’s what I’m shooting for (Guerrero, 2016).

Jerry Morales was interviewed on April 20, 2016 at the Eagle Pass campus. He is in his second semester at the college. Morales has taken advantage of a program to become a tutor at SWTJC. He took dual credit classes while in high school and, after attending only one year, will graduate with his Associate’s degree this semester. He commented that the financial relief of one year in college tuition versus two years did not go unnoticed. Jerry does not receive grants, and has not had to take out any loans to cover his college expenses. He expressed his appreciation for the dual credit opportunity in this way:

… not having to pay for college level classes and the ability to take them in high school help out and was really nice, to have that and to also have a job, paying me to use my head (as a tutor) instead of what the norm is here in this town, I mean it is really gratifying and I am appreciative of this program. (Morales, 2016)

Jerry explained that he comes from a family of “workers” and he is looking for a job that compensates the use of his head and not so much his back. He is the first in his family to break the cycle, “… I mean everyone’s just waiting to see what becomes of me so I guess I’m the guinea pig of the family (laughs) (Morales, 2016).”

Jerry is earning his business degree with the intent of taking over his father’s tortilla shop. He is also passionate about baseball. As a baseball player, he would like to, “open up my own training facility, become a coach, that’s my number one goal (Morales, 2016).” However, in
the same breath Jerry expressed a deep desire to take over the business for his dad and let him enjoy retirement. Jerry proudly shared with the researcher that he was accepted to the University of Texas at San Antonio and Texas State University. However, the cost to attend those universities was too expensive for Jerry and his parents.

Jerry now works the equivalent of a full-time job between his work as a tutor and working the family business during the weekend to pay for college. Because Jerry participated in the dual credit opportunities offered at his high school by Southwest Texas Junior College, the choice became easier to make the decision to stay in the area and attend SWTJC one additional year after finishing high school. This decision will mean Jerry can earn his Associates Degree in Business and debt free. However, to reach his goal of a bachelor’s degree, Jerry will need financial assistance to attend UTSA in fall of 2016. The change from high school to college for Jerry opened his eyes to the fact that his success was directly related to his own initiative. Jerry did not feel as if there were any major barriers once he began his college journey, and explained the difference between high school and college this way:

…it (college) was very professional, in high school students are forced to be there, and here (in college) everyone’s here because they want to be here. Before, on certain days in high school I’d like to hang out with people that wouldn’t have goals and would slack off. And here you don’t have that option. Here if you’re going to slack off you’re on your own and that’s because you decided to do that, so that really pushed me to just stay on the right track and stop making excuses. The deadlines are real, there’s is no turn in tomorrow option, so that’s got me in shape (Morales, 2016).

Jerry’s family is very supportive of his goals. He knows that his mom would prefer that he not leave the area to go to college. Jerry has two uncles that went to college and they were successful
one is a lawyer and the other one sold a successful business. When asked if his friends and family understood what he was going through at college, he quickly responded that they do not really understand, “… they don’t really understand why I’m up until three or four in the morning doing homework (Morales, 2016).” Jerry is very empathic of his family’s lack of understanding of what he is going through while attempting to earn a college degree, “so it’s just the little things like that, but I mean…, I understand because they didn’t go through it, so I don’t give it much thought. I don’t get mad at them for criticizing me for stuff like that (Morales, 2016).”

Jerry plans to move back to the Eagle Pass area after he finishes his four-year degree. He wants to move home to raise a family and to be around his family. He regrets the amount of time that he is forced to sacrifice in order to pursue his academic goals. Jerry looks forward to experiencing a city like San Antonio or Dallas before he returns to the southwest Texas region. Jerry’s entire interview focused on the words he began the interview with, “SWTJC gave me opportunities that I never thought I would get from a community college (Morales, 2016).”

Interviewed on April 13, 2016 at the Uvalde campus, Felicia Garcia is an older student attempting her degree in nursing. She would like to focus her efforts on labor and deliver specialties. Felicia and her family have lived in Uvalde their entire lives and her choice to attend SWTJC is primarily based on location. Felicia is the proud mother of two children and she quickly offers that they are the center of her world. Her first son was born while she was still attending high school. She graduated high school with honors, but struggled with college. Attending college right out of high school, with a two-year-old son already demanding her attention, was not a combination for success:

I finished school but I did have to work, so a lot of that was very, very hard for me. My first year of college, I was a young mother with a two-year-old little boy, and I struggled.
I took night classes, and between that and work with a child, I just couldn’t do it. I was still young, immature and had to provide a roof over him and myself. It was just…to me it was just hopeless, it was like… you know I’m not going to do anything (attend college) you know at the moment I’ve got to support my child and feed him. So, that’s why it took ten years to come back. But I am now in the restaurant business, and working two jobs. I don’t want to do that for the rest of my life, and I don’t want my kids to do that for the rest of their lives. So, I see things differently. You get older, you understand about finances, about credit, and it does change you. You look at school from a different perspective [spoken emotionally]. (Garcia, 2016)

Felicia is convinced that she would not have been able to attend college had it not been for SWTJC. Calculating travel time, fuel for vehicle, baby sitter, and tuition costs, it becomes apparent as to why. Felicia believes that her family and friends support her completely in her academic journey. She believes her family is proud and her friends have a new-found respect for her. Felicia thinks that her family generally understands that she is attending college and they understand that she is determined to finish what she started. However,

I don’t think they understand how much time and energy it takes away from me. And so trying to spend a little bit time with my mother, my father, my brothers, my sisters… it’s difficult to spend separate amounts of time with everybody and make everybody feel at a comfort level that I spent enough time with them, when … in fact I don’t have time for myself (Garcia, 2016).

Felicia is hopeful that there will be a job available in the area so that they would not be forced to make the decision to move out of Uvalde and away from her family. She is not completely
fearful about a move because she has god-father in the Port Aransas area if a move was required to find a job.

Felicia has not had to take out any student loans for her academic journey so far, but sees the eventual need for loans in the next year or so. Once she made the decision to return to college, 10 years after her first attempt, the next obstacle to overcome was how technology had changed the landscape of student interaction. She noted that turning in homework was no longer a matter of paper and pencil but now required the use of a software package that she knew nothing about. She felt embarrassed she did not know how to use the software. Felicia praised the support services that are available to students provided by the College. She went as far as to comment that if the current support service had been available 10 years ago when she first attempted college courses; she might have been successful.

Residence Halls: A Key Component of Campus Life at a Rural Community College

Public 2-year colleges unlike their Public 4-year counter parts do not usually offer students a place to live while seeking their two-year academic or technical degrees. Residence halls at rural community colleges provide their students housing physically near the College where they can live their lives and pursue their academic aspirations. Moeck’s (2005) study of residential housing at community colleges dispelled the myth that community colleges do not provide student housing. In fact, a total of 232 colleges granting associate degrees reported to 2000-01 IPEDS had residence halls (p. 49). “Residence hall” is the preferred label rather than “dormitory,” in order to provide language intending to describe a place utilized for more than simply sleeping. Moeck’s second conclusion in her 2005 study stated, “Residence halls in publicly controlled community colleges are fundamental components of the campus life of the institutions that have them (p. 109).”
It is important to note the general lack of research related to community college housing. Therefore, Moeck’s study set the baseline for future housing studies of community colleges. In fact, SWTJC has two residence halls that are now nearing 40 years in age, an all-female hall, Eddie R. Garner Hall, and Hubbard Hall, which is co-ed. Thomas (2005) found that Hubbard Hall possessed a wing for male, as well as a wing for female students. According to Thomas (2005), Dean Barker explained that the Eddie R. Garner Hall (all-female) is never full but would most likely remain all female because many Hispanic parents strongly prefer their daughters live in an all-female residential hall (2005, p. 89).

Thomas (2005) reported that the rise in enrollment in Del Rio and Eagle Pass was having a negative impact on Uvalde’s fill rates for Garner and Hubbard Halls. Because funding in Texas for community colleges are beginning to provide incentives for “completers” it is also important to look to residence halls as another learning environment meant to help students persist and graduate.

Over the past thirty years, student development research clearly indicates that students flourish academically and socially by living communally with other residents (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Contrary to Pascarella and Terenzini’s assessment, it should be noted that a study recently completed by William L. King III in 2015 attempted to predict persistence of first-time freshmen at a large-city community college (enrolled in 2010-13) and the results were statistically insignificant between those students living on-campus when compared to those students living off-campus (King, 2015, p. 91). Admittedly, much more research is required to determine the effects that student housing has on the eco-system of community colleges. Institutions might begin to look towards student housing as a means to generate revenue to assist their colleges in an era when local and state support continues to dwindle. The possible increase
in student success that might occur through full-time students in housing might in-turn provided additional funding from the State providing a catalyst for community colleges to build residence halls. The researcher is employed by a large rural community college that over the past decade has more than doubled the number of residences living on campus (1000+) in 9 residence halls. The College currently has plans to increase their bed count by 250, or 25%, within the next 5 years.

Full-time students living on a community college campus creates other responsibilities for the Institution related to student safety. For example, funding for a police officer at a rural campus is a must when student housing exists. Imagine if the Hispanic population of southwest Texas does not want their daughters living in a co-ed resident hall, it is not a far leap to understand their concern for their daughters’ safety while living away from home and now living on campus. Their concerns are engrained by the indigenous populations of SWTJC’s state-assigned service area being mostly Hispanics with primarily Catholic and Baptist religious beliefs. Many times the College is forced into having conversations about living situations with the incoming freshman classes that they and their families may not have experienced before. Students that attend SWTJC typically are from small towns and may not be as aware of the dangers of strangers and drinking. Thomas (2005) reported that SWTJC received two reports of sexual assault in the past year, although no charges were filed because the students were not sure what had happened and whether or not penetration had occurred. Sexual assault is discussed during orientation and tends to create an uncomfortable environment for such a discussion to occur openly. Thomas (2005) stated that Dean Barker has never experienced a sexual assault complaint where alcohol was not involved.
CHAPTER 4: EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Introduction

The southwest Texas region is a vast area of land that borders Mexico. For the past 150 years, the region has been known for its ranches and farms. Economic development activity in the region prior to the late 1990’s focused largely on landing the “big one.” As covered in Chapter 2, the ability to attract large industries to rural areas began to wane in the late 1980’s. The Del Monte Food facility in Crystal City provides a prime example of a large corporation that the rural south targeted. Crystal City has a population of 7,138 (2010 census) and is known for serving as the spinach capital of the world (a statue of Popeye is proudly displayed in front of city hall) and for its political corruption. A feature in the Washington Post’s National Security section about Crystal City was titled, *This might be the most corrupt little town in America* (Zapotosky, 2016). Federal prosecutors had alleged that a majority of Crystal City council members were engaged in a conspiracy to help one another take bribes from those want to do business with the government (Zapotosky, 2016).

The origins of the Rural Community College Initiative stemmed from difficult economic times in the 1980’s. It was Ford Foundation’s president Susan Berresford and George Autry that began discussions about investing in community colleges to encourage economic growth in impoverished rural areas of America (Eller, et al., 2003). Southwest Texas Junior College has a service area that encompasses some of the most impoverished counties in the U.S. (refer to Figure 2.2). Recall from Chapter 2 that 10 of the 11 counties served by SWTJC had seen poverty rates of between 30% to 40% of the population living poverty since 1960.
During his original 1994 visit, Katsinas noted that the community did not look to SWTJC for leadership in economic development activities, nor did the College view itself as an active player in the region for economic development. Thomas (2005) noted that even though SWTJC possessed campus locations across the region, including Del Rio and Eagle Pass these were relatively new and the College was generally passive with its energy within those communities. The RCCI’s goal to encourage active participation in economic growth activities by local community colleges was informed by recommendations from *The Knowledge Net: Connecting Communities, Learners, and Colleges*, by the American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees:

Community colleges should use their widespread community prominence and accessibility to help forge positive relationships among diverse segments of society.
Community colleges should assess their community’s needs and assets and implement appropriate programs to cultivate and enhance current and future community leaders…

(Eller, et al., 2003, p. 2)

This chapter will examine economic development activities in SWTJC’s 11-county state-assigned service area. The RCCI encouraged each community to define economic development that was in harmony with their local values and to set the appropriate goals to lead their communities to prosperity. Knowing that the natural resources are different from region to region, there is no “one-size” fits all regional development plan. As such, regional development activities require active players from the region to work harmoniously to an agreed-upon goal thus, placing the community college in the best possible role to be a catalyst for economic development. The RCCI defined economic development as a means to create jobs that lead to higher incomes that lead to generating wealth and in turn reinvesting into the regions’ business,
institutions, and people (Eller, et al., 2003). Additionally, this chapter will examine the economic impact of SWTJC within its region.

Economic Opportunity on the Border

“There’s not a whole lot of industry…and a lot of wide open spaces” said Dr. Hector Gonzales, President of SWTJC, when interviewed in 2016 by the researcher. Gonzales’ one-liner accurately described the researcher’s observations during his visits to SWTJC in 2016. Dr. Gonzales has a unique perspective of the College and the region based on the many years and multiple roles he has held during his two decades of service. He further explained, that the 11-county state-assigned service area for SWTJC shares approximately 1,255 miles of border with Mexico, which in turn influences the region’s economic development due to cross-border manufacturing. Other than pockets of factories run by U.S. companies in Mexico, known as maquiladoras, there are no major manufacturing companies operating on either side of the border. Gonzales explained that there is very little growth in the economy, with no real manufacturing jobs. Most of the employment is provided by civic institutions,

…you know the regions primary employers are, hospitals, school districts, local governments, and local colleges. There’s not a whole lot of industry and a lot of wide open spaces. That’s really… how I would define and characterize the region, still at this day and age there are a lot of first generation college students. (Gonzales, 2016)

How to determine what is needed? This is a salient question posed by the nine step Vision to Action Toolkit provided to RCCI participating schools. SWTJC created an event that would attempt to answer the question of, “What is needed in our region?” Through funding from the RCCI, Southwest Texas Junior College embarked on a journey to answer the what is needed question, while simultaneously rebranding the College as a regional player. The College created
a unique competition engineered to spur innovative ways to stimulate economies in depressed and declining areas. This case competition occurred in the fourth year of SWTJC participation in the RCCI. The sleepy little southern rural college in Uvalde, Texas found its regional voice during the 1998 case competition. Most will agree that trust is required prior to following someone else’s lead. While it is clear that SWTJC was not untrusted, they were self-focused prior to participating in the RCCI as to how or what might change the way they were viewed. The College needed to become trusted advisor before it could become catalyst for change.

Providing additional legitimacy to the College’s efforts to spur economic development, the combination of the Ford Foundation’s support, and the advisory panel chaired by Former Governor Dolph Briscoe (a hometown favorite), goes a long way. The case competition committee hosted by SWTJC was not only supported by the Ford Foundation but also by local corporations and organizations. *Transforming the Regional Economy of Southwest Texas: A Case Competition* (1998) was created to generate new “thinking” about the economy in the nine-county Middle Rio Grande Region. This was a student competition. There were four state universities that competed: the University of Texas at San Antonio, Mississippi State University, San Diego State University, and Oklahoma State University. The focus presented to the competitors was to determine which sectors of the economy possessed the greatest relative growth potential. An important criterion was that the exercise should lead to an increase in the quantity and the quality of job in the region. This approach was unique in two ways: 1) it was the first time the model was adapted for economic development, 2) it included the incorporation of a post-competition panel of national experts to weigh in with their expertise.

The competing teams were required to submit their written plans well in advance of the competition. Two days prior to their formal competition, they were given a chance to adjust their
proposals after taking part in tours of businesses in Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde areas. The teams were required to defend their proposals before a three-judge panel. The judges were Paul Bracher, Executive Vice President of Frost National Bank in San Antonio, Bracher was a Uvalde native, Dr. Michael Conroy, Program Officer for the Ford Foundation in Mexico City and a former professor of economics with 25 years’ experience and Judy Canales, Deputy State Director of USDA’s Rural Development program also a Uvalde native. After presenting their ideas to the judge’s panel, students had the opportunity to discuss the reality of their proposals with a panel of national experts. The experts included George Autry, President of MDC, Inc.; Brian Kelley, Senior Program Officer and Director, Economic Opportunity Programs at the Heinz Endowments in Pittsburgh; Dr. Fran Hoy, Dean of the College of Business Administration at the University of Texas in El Paso; R. Deirdre Hunt, Associate Professor of Management in University College Cork, Ireland; and, Dr. Raymond Sandoval of Quantos Consulting in Las Cruces, NM. Listed below is a small snippet of the types of job creation proposals submitted via the case competition (refer to Appendix I for a list of all proposals by students):

- Create a pecan grower cooperative to pool efforts and resources, create a more effective way to take product to market, expand shelling operations, and develop the market and production of water filtration devices using pecan shells; increase demand for mohair products, perhaps through a campaign to make mohair the fabric of choice among athletes; expanding its cachet with the San Antonio Mexican Market and catalogue marketing of original sweaters and pocketbooks designed, dyed, and woven by Indians in central Mexico (expansion of an existing business, Dishman, International).

- Expand the goat meat export industry.
• Expand the existing aircraft industry in one or a cluster of firms associated with aircraft up fitting, maintenance and repair, building on Sierra Industries.
• Establish entrepreneur education programs to encourage small business formation and expansion.
• Develop the tourism industry access to Mexico, local shopping, arts and crafts, as well as hunting and fishing.
• Increase the capacity of the regional transportation infrastructure to make manufacturing and tourism more attractive.
• Form an alliance with neighbors to the north to improve Highway 83 to Oklahoma.
• Establish a toxic-free recycling operation for waste products from maquiladoras in Ciudad Acuña and Piedras Negras.
• Expand botanical herb and organic produce farming.
• Create an Internet catalog business for Latina entrepreneurs.

(Southwest Texas Junior College, 1998)

The case competition summary report noted a common thread among the case presentations: the need for a greater coordination among regional organizations and agencies with development agendas. “All four teams expressed surprise at the fragmentation of effort and the failure to communicate across county lines (p. 19).” One thought-provoking recommendation from the panel of experts was to establish an endowed chair of applied economic development at the community college. The primary goal was to create a financially independent researcher that focused their energy into building strategic regional alliances and to attract additional development expertise. This is an interesting concept and as of the researcher’s visit in 2016, the
College lacks an endowed chair for applied economic development. However, the college has a robust workforce training and continuing education department. The case competition provided an important vote of assurance from stakeholders (students and experts) that the College understood what was required in the region. Additionally, the College gained the ability to solicit and evaluate development proposals on their own. The combination of understanding what is needed and how to achieve what is needed has the power to transform the southwest Texas economy, “… but only through a broad-based and rigorous regional planning effort can this unique opportunity be realized (Aranda, 2016).”

Expanding Services to Adults and Workforce Training

In 1995 Southwest Texas Junior College hired Romelia Aranda as its Director of Workforce Training and Development. The hiring of this position was in direct response to SWTJC’s participation with the RCCI. The strategy to increase SWTJC’s capacity to deliver training to the region, a core RCCI goal, was realized when Aranda was hired and SWTJC’s first Business Industry Office was opened. Aranda’s job duties closely mirrored the recommendation made by the expert panel during the case competition to create an endowed chair at the community college, apart from the funding source. Aranda was given an initial goal of serving 500 individuals in five years. In a prideful tone during her interview in 2016, she indicated that goal was reached within a few months, providing an example of the pent up need for training. Thomas reported tremendous growth in workforce non-credit contact hours from 1994 (prior to RCCI) to 2003-04, increasing from approximately 20,000 to 97,851, nearly a five-fold increase (2005, p. 104). In 2013, the SWTJC delivered over 131,000 non-credit contact hours demonstrating and increase of 556% over 1994, prior to participation in the RCCI. Table 4.1 shows the volatile nature of providing workforce training courses in the SWTJC service area.
Since the College has to determine a need before delivering non-credit courses, enrollment trends can fluctuate from year to year. There was a significant drop of 23% in workforce training enrollment from 2006 to 2007 (92,639). This large decrease coincides with the beginning of the Great Recession. On average, the College is delivering about 130,000 non-credit contact hours annually. The largest single year increase occurred between 2011, and 2012 when contact hours grew from 119,681 to 167,644, a 40% single year increase. Aranda explained that 2012 was the beginning of the Eagle Ford Shale. In 2011, there were 368 production oil leases, and by the following year there were 1,262 production oil leases. The Eagle Ford Shale website states that the new oil shale field in southwest Texas is one of the most active shale fields in the world, with more than 100 rigs running. This type of activity required many more truck drivers than were available at the time. The College understood its role in the region and began build a curriculum to respond to industry needs that would get students into jobs. Aranda explained that the entire region works fairly well together, with everyone knowing each other and their capabilities, to help their fellow citizens find good paying jobs. However, Aranda went on to explain why SWTJC executes workforce training and continuing education just a little differently in its southwest Texas region.
Table 4.1

Non-Credit Contact Hours from 2005 to 2013

Data Source: SWTJC Office of Workforce Development

Aranda was asked to describe how curriculum is organized to align with regional requirement. She pointed out that some curricula are dictated by the state, like certification and some licensure programs. The success of all classes is directly related to the abilities of both instructors and students. Aranda believes that the students’ success arrives at different paces and at different levels, thus the most important element, according to Aranda toward the regions success, is found within the attitudes of the College and the instructors. Dean Aranda explains service attitude in this manner:
…but it’s a matter of attitude you know? What we tell and expect our instructors to do is when they know a student is struggling, then we expect the instructor to make time for one-on-one instruction. We expect the instructor to refer struggling students to the different resources that the College offers. As the SWTJC leaders are expecting the faculty to do that, we are providing support that they need as instructors to do whatever it is needed to help the student succeed. For example, our truck driving program, somebody’s having, you know, a hard time, you know learning how to… shift? I don’t know whatever... Even though our program typically maintains a three-to-one student-to-instructor ratio, we will bring in another instructor just to do one-on-one with that student to get through the hump? So, it’s not necessarily changing curriculum, it’s the delivery from our faculty and how they show that they truly care about the students’ success.

When someone leaves unsuccessful in their educational journey, it is not for a lack of trying on the College’s part. Another truck driving example, is that the College trains for a Class A license but if the student is unsuccessful reaching for a Class A, there may be a Class B option that we attempt to get them through successfully (Aranda, 2016).

Workforce training at SWTJC has remained vital to the College’s mission to serve the southwest Texas region. This is a constant in each interview with College leaders they realize that no one can accomplish their goals in a silo, and collaboration is critical. The College’s ability to develop training or certification classes and models along the lines the RCCI had envisioned are seen as important to all. Interviews with President Hector Gonzales, Vice President of the Del Rio Campus Dereck Sandoval, and Romelia Aranda, Dean Workforce Development all revealed stories about how the College fulfill needs in their communities. The Eagle Ford Shale field provides a perfect example as to how the College has the ability to
recognize a 243% increase in an industry, and assists in the immediate training of individuals to accomplish the new or expanded workload in southwest Texas.

Promoting Regional Economic Development

The three primary population centers of SWTJC’s service area are Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass. One of the largest assets in Del Rio is Laughlin Air Force Base. Laughlin AFB is considered the largest pilot training base in the U.S. Air Force. The base occupies about 6 square miles and is considered a residential area with a population of 1,569 according the U.S. Census Bureau (2010). A prime example of the partnership and active engagement with the community is found in the Aviation Maintenance Program offered by SWTJC’s Del Rio campus. Sandoval describes this one-year program as they have recently graduated their first class,

Our second class is full, as a matter of fact, we have a waiting list to get to the third class.

Well…theoretically we graduated two classes last year (because) we started one at midterm, and they doubled up and they finished the hours and the program, and we started another one this year so…and the employment rate is why it began… and I want to say it was about twenty-four graduates between the two classes last year? . . . and all but seven, so 17 are employed (Sandavol, 2016).

The 17 SWTJC graduates are now employed as aviation mechanics at Laughlin AFB. The partnership, and resulting educational opportunities, with the U.S. Air Force known as the P4 Initiative. The Air Force’s vision is for the P4 Initiative to offer a vehicle to leverage the capabilities and resources of military installation, local governments, and/or commercial entities to reduce operating cost and the cost of services while retaining or enhancing quality (U.S. Air Force, 2014).
Dr. Gonzales (2016) provides another example of SWTJC’s ability to understand local requirements and respond accordingly. After several years of declining interest in the agriculture programs offered by the College, SWTJC worked to better align programs with the economy and be more creative. Gonzales recalls one of the larger initiatives involved the creation of a wildlife program. This wildlife program offered by the College was the first of its kind in Texas, as Dr. Gonzales explain:

Farm and ranching took a different direction from the historical cow business, and the goat business and so forth. So, a lot of these ranches were sold and are now primarily hunting ranches, and that created a unique need. The uniqueness is that an individual works under the guidance of a wildlife biologist. Combined with the fact that we have a lot of absentee land owners, for example the business man from Houston buys a 5,000-acre ranch here in South Texas and lives primarily in Houston. He comes during hunting season, but for the rest of the time he’s absentee. If a land owner hires a wildlife biologist and says, “what do I need to do on this ranch to manage it properly,” the wildlife biologist develops a plan. So what we did is develop a curriculum for a wildlife tech. A person that could work under a wildlife biologist and implement those aspects of a plan and work for the land owner. What we did is develop a curriculum based on local needs, working with biologists, and land owners to identify the skill sets these individuals need. After developing the curriculum and submitting it to the Coordinating Board in Austin, the rest is history. We were the first community college in Texas to offer this degree. We developed the curriculum for it and as far as I know, it’s the only two-year program in the state that offers a wildlife tech degree and certificates (Gonzales, 2016).
SWTJC remains involved in several partnerships between local entities in each of the counties serviced by the College. Both Vice President Sandoval and Dean Aranda highlighted the fact that none of them individually could provide everything required to improve the lives of the community. They noted that the ability to share resources among the different entities was a recipe for success. For example, the local high school might teach cosmetology during standard high school hours of operation however, the facility would go unused in the evenings if the community college did not offer cosmetology classes by using existing resources during off peak hours. With this type of strategy, the whole community receives the opportunity to learn, not just the high school students. When Aranda was asked to provide a few examples of partnerships like has been described above, she simply paused and then giggled ever so softly… “there are so many, I don’t know where to begin.” Aranda began by explaining the phlebotomy program in the high school,

For instance, we have a Phlebotomy Program in High School and you know, I was apprehensive about you know, doing the blood draws outside of a high school setting. In a place that already met all the OSHA safety stuff. You know, and it was just a way for us to kinda make sure that there was absolutely no way possible that something would happen with the blood draws. But you know we partner for facility use and with different entities. I remember very early on when we started our nurse’s aide program we partnered with a local nursing home, they had a program going on already and we partnered with them, for their instructor.

They provided the instructor, we provided the curriculum, facilities and people from the community that did not have to make the commitment of working for the nursing home after it was all said and done. Had they taken the program at the nursing
home and not from the College, they would have had to commit to working for the nursing home. But through our partnership, we were able to deliver the class, open it up to the public and give people the option of working where they wanted to. There has just been so many – so many that I have been a part of during my 21 years at the College (Aranda, 2016).

The partnerships described by these three leaders from SWTJC paint an image of the caring individuals that have the ability to make real and long lasting impact on the people living in the SWTJC service area (region). Moreover, with each and every interview the researcher took note of a reoccurring theme, “How can we help get them to where they want to be…” SWTJC has a regional focus but has not lost the nuance of remembering that each and every individual is a human with hopes and dreams. Dean Aranda stated it this way, “It’s just who we are and how we do things… everyone knows each other and I have never had anyone tell me flat no.” Additionally, during each interview, the researcher was directed to find and speak with the Outreach Department of SWTJC. The researcher was told that time must be spent interviewing Michelle Torres, the Director of Outreach.

Southwest Texas Junior College has few departments that assist the region in understanding what the College has to offer to each individual in all 11 counties. For example, all recruiting activities for SWTJC are handled by the Outreach Department, directed by Michelle Torres. She is a life-long resident of Uvalde and is proud of her College. She provided an analogy to help the researcher understand her perspective. The town of Uvalde, Texas and the city of Orlando, Florida both have something the locals take for granted, she said. Orlando has Disney World and Uvalde has Southwest Texas Junior College. Torres believes that the local residents at each location take for granted the unique features available to them located right in
their own back yard, because of course they see it every day. Director Torres defines her role as the individual that helps the *locals* recognize the gold they have located in their own back yards access to higher education.

The Outreach Department divides into eight distinct functions with dual credit as the largest. There are a total of 24 high schools providing approximately 2,000 students SWTJC dual credit courses each semester. The U.S. Department of Education defines dual credit as a term given to courses in which students currently in high school can take to earn both high school and college credits at the same time. Dual credit courses are usually taught in any combination based on resources available. For example, the dual credit course can be delivered at either the College or the high school, and the instructors may be at either the College or the high school. Torres has two coordinators that split the 24 schools between them and those coordinators are responsible for registering those schools. Additionally, the coordinator makes site visits to interact with students and counselors at those locations.

The Outreach program is also responsible for local articulation of high school and community college curricula. Torres referred to this as the “old tech prep” program that was abandoned by the State. However, SWTJC chose to keep the program running but simply renaming the local articulation program. This is another mechanism to allow high school students the ability to get an early start on college. The nuance between dual credit and local articulation is found within the credentialing requirements. Dual credit instructors must pass the credentialing requirements set forth by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). SACS is one of six regional accreditation organizations in the U.S. Those instructors desiring to teach under the local articulation (old tech prep) only need to meet local ISD policies. For example, if you are an instructor already teaching at the high school, then you may teach in
the local articulation based on subject matter expertise. The local agreement is between the ISD’s and SWTJC that allow those students to complete high school graduation requirements and have a head start towards their associates degree in programs like, computer programming, welding, criminal justice, child development to name a few.

Economic development activities executed by SWTJC’s Outreach Department expanded to include work places such as the local prison. SWTJC provides access to higher education to the Briscoe State Prison in Dilley. Torres shared that there is a new Pell second chance grant that allows access to fund for those incarcerated. SWTJC has taken advantage of that opportunity to provide training since 2002-03 to the inmates at the Dilley Briscoe Unit. Thirteen years of delivering courses to inmates has produced an enrollment of about 150 inmates per academic year, with 2010-11 having the largest enrollment of 200 unduplicated headcount from the Briscoe Unit.

Southwest Texas Junior College’s economic impact in the region should not be understated. Expanding economic opportunity along the Texas border is being led by SWTJC’s regional approach to aligning community economic needs with the educational requirements of its citizens. In December 2014, Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) completed an economic impact and investment analysis of Southwest Texas Junior College. Its 78-page report titled, *Demonstrating the Economic Value of Southwest Texas Junior College* is broken into two major modules. The first module provides analysis on SWTJC’s impact on the business community (regional economic impact analysis). The second module examines the return on investment made by students, society, and taxpayers. EMSI utilized several sources of data from academic and financial reports from SWTJC during 2012-13 academic year. Other sources include, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, The Higher Education
coordinating Board, and outputs of EMSI’s college impact model and SAM model, as well as published material on education to social behavior. The executive summary, quoted below, provide a quick snapshot of their findings:

**Economic Impact Analysis (EMSI Study of SWTJC)**

This study reports the impacts of SWTJC in terms of value added and jobs. Impacts reported in this section equal the sum of the initial and multiplier effects – where the initial effect is the shock to the economy caused by SWTJC and the multiplier effects are the subsequent economic activity occurring in the region.

- In FY 2012-13, SWTJC enrolled 7,524 students in courses for credit, spent $20.8 million in payroll that employed 310 full-time and 200 part-time employees, and spent another $14.0 million on goods and services.
- The net impact of SWTJC operational expenditures was approximately $24.3 million in added value, equivalent to 573 jobs, in the SWTJC Service Area.
- Around 2% of SWTJC students originated from outside the SWTJC Service Area. The spending of these out-of-region students for living and personal expenses created approximately $193,500 in added value for the SWTJC Service Area, equivalent to 5 jobs.
- An estimated 98% of SWTJC alumni stay in the SWTJC Service Area after leaving the college. The accumulated impact of alumni who were employed in the regional workforce in FY 2012-13 amounted to $132.3 million in added value in the SWTJC Service Area, equivalent to 3,233 jobs.
- The total impact of SWTJC on the regional economy in FY 2012-13 was $156.9 million in added value, or the same amount that 3,811 jobs would generate for the
SWTJC Service Area. This is approximately equal to 2.6% of the SWTJC Service Area’s gross regional product.

**Investment Analysis (EMSI Study of SWTJC)**

Investment analysis is the practice of comparing the costs and benefits of an investment to determine whether or not it is profitable. This study considers SWTJC as an investment from the perspectives of students, society, and taxpayers.

- Students invest their own money and time in their education. Students enrolled at SWTJC paid a total of $10.5 million to cover the cost of tuition, fees, books, and supplies at SWTJC in FY 2012-13. They also forwent $28.4 million in earnings that they would have generated had they been working instead of learning. In return, students will receive a present value of $238.9 million in increased earnings over their working lives. This translates to a return of $6.10 in higher future income for every $1 that students pay for their education at SWTJC. The corresponding annual rate of return is 20.1%.

- Texas as a whole spent $68.7 million on SWTJC education in FY 2012-13. This includes $34.9 million in SWTJC expenditures, $5.4 million in student expenditures, and $28.4 million in student opportunity costs. In return, the state of Texas will receive a present value of $1.4 billion in added state income over the course of the students’ working lives. Texas will also benefit from $21.9 million in present value social savings related to reduced crime, lower welfare and unemployment, and increased health and well-being across the state. For every dollar society invests in an SWTJC student’s education, an average of $21.10 in benefits will accrue to Texas over the course of the student’s career.
• Taxpayers provided $11.8 million of state and local funding to SWTJC in FY 2012-13. In return, taxpayers will receive a present value of $95.1 million in added tax revenue stemming from the students’ higher lifetime incomes and the increased output of businesses amounts. Savings to the public sector add another $6.7 million in benefits due to a reduced demand for government-funded social services in Texas. For every taxpayer dollar spent on SWTJC educations, taxpayers will receive an average of $8.70 in return over the course of the students’ working lives. In other words, taxpayers enjoy an annual rate of return of 20.0% (EMSI, 2014, pp. 5-6).

The report provides an unbiased perspective about the impact SWTJC will have on its community using only the data from FY 2012-13 and looking forward. The assumptions are that students after graduating from SWTJC will remain employed. Table 1.7 found on page 13 of the report, *Expected income in the SWTJC Service Area at the midpoint of an individual’s working career by education level*. That table shows the return on investment a student will receive in future higher wages and more specifically, in the SWTJC service area, and not just some average in the state or nation. Expected annual income for students that dropout of high school is approximately $14,300. If the student will finish their high school education their annual earnings raise by 66% totaling $23,700. For an additional investment in two more years of college, and earning an Associate’s degree, the student’s earnings increase by 35% to $32,000. Provided the student follows the same path and invests in a few more years of college and earns a bachelor’s degree, they will increase their annual income by another 40% to $44,700. A 50,000-foot view of the earning potential between a student with less than a high school degree and one with a bachelor’s degree shows a return on the student’s investment in education
potentially translates to an increase of 213% in annual earning power. If the student will make
the investment in education, it can lead to an earning potential that moves from $14,300 a year to
$44,700 a year.

The RCCI’s goal is to provide access to higher education and to see the College turn into
a catalyst for economic development. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau in 1990, 2000, and
2010 compiled by the Southern Rural Development Center about the counties serviced by
SWTJC provides a bird’s eye view between the relationship between education and prosperity.
The following figures are discussed briefly with the goal of determining the positive trends (if
any) in each county over a 20-year period. Careful analysis of Figure 4.1, Percent of SWTJC’s
Population age 25 or Older with Less Than a High School Diploma provides a positive trend for
all counties from 1990 to 2010. In 1990, five of the 11 counties had greater than 50% of the
population age 25 or older without a high school education. Maverick reported the highest level
at 64.3%, followed closely by Zavala at 61.4%, and finally Dimmit with 60.2% of its adult
population without a high school education. All 11 counties show a reduction in the number of
adults without a high school education from 1990 to 2010. The largest decreases from 1990 to
2010 were Zavala (-25.7%), reducing from 61.4% to 35.7%, and Dimmit (-21.5%) falling from
60.2% to 38.7%. The evidence shows that every county in SWTJC service area has made
tremendous strides in keeping its youth in high school.
The same consistence and rhythm found in Figure 4.1 is not found in Figure 4.2. The percentage of the population age 25 years or older with a high school diploma or greater shows each county has responded differently from 1990 to 2010. Medina and Real counties have reduced the number of adults with a high school diploma or greater since 1990 to 2010 with each county showing a reduction of 3.3%. However, except for Edwards County, that stayed relatively flat, all counties experienced growth in this area. The top three percentage increases were reported in Zavala and Frio at 9.1%, La Salle at 10.9%, and Dimmit County with 15.1%. In 1990 Dimmit had 18.3% of its adult population with a high school diploma or greater and by 2010 that percentage had increased to 33.4%.
In 1990, most of the population in SWTJC’s service area did not have a high school diploma. This trend has been reversed. In 1990, the thought of having a college education was clearly out of reach. Now this same region is striving for a 4-year bachelor’s degrees. Figure 4.3, *Percent of SWTJC’s Population age 25 or Older with a Bachelors or Greater* show a greater majority of the counties increasing each census year from 1990 to 2010. La Salle County had a reduction in the number of residents with a bachelor’s degree from 10.8% or the population in 1990 to only 7% in 2010 (-3.8%). Real County demonstrated the largest increase from 10% to 21% of its population having a 4-year degree. Other counties with large increases were Medina 9.6%, Edwards 9%, and Dimmit at 8.1%. In 1990, the county with the largest percent of adults with a bachelor’s degree or greater was Edwards at 13.8%; by 2010 it had grown to 22.8%. The region served by SWTJC has become a college going community. This is evidenced by the reduction in those individuals without a high school diploma in the region. In 1990, nearly half the population did not have a high school diploma, but by 2010 that number had fallen to 34%,
going from one half to a third of the population. Additionally, in 1990 only 10% of the population held a bachelor’s degree or higher. By 2010 there were 15.2% of the population with a 4-year degree or greater resulting in a 50% over the 20-year period.

Figure 4.3

*Percent of SWTJC’s Population age 25 or Older with a Bachelors or Greater*

![Graph showing the percentage of SWTJC’s population age 25 or older with a bachelor's degree or greater from 1990 to 2010.](image)

Data Source: Southern Rural Development Center

Education has long played a key role in lives of the residents of southwest Texas. It is a firmly held belief that if one receives an education, whether it be academic or technical, the recipient gains access to a better life. This is extremely important for those living in impoverished areas like those in SWTJC’s service area. The long-held belief is that if one earns an education then they become employable. Figure 4.4, *Unemployment Rate SWTJC Service Area* provides a glance at the 11-counties serviced by SWTJC from 1990 to 2010. The average rate of unemployment of all 11 counties in 1990 was 11.6%. There were six counties with double digit unemployment with the highest levels in Zavala at 21% and Maverick with 30.6% unemployed these were the data that attracted the interest of the Ford foundation. By 2010, Maverick County reduced the percentage of unemployed down to 14.4%. Unemployment rates
tend to fluctuate from county to county and from census year to census year, demonstrating the volatile nature of work in southwest Texas.

Figure 4.4

Unemployment Rate SWTJC Service Area

Data Source: Southern Rural Development Center

Median per capita incomes in SWTJC service area are plotted on Figure 4.5. Each of the 11 counties showed a positive change from 1990 to 2010. On average in 1990, the 11 counties averaged $15,301 in median income and by 2010 that had increased to $30,769. In 1990, Medina County had the highest median income; this remained the case in 2000 ($35,723) and again in 2010 ($45,278). La Salle County experienced the largest increase in median income from $12,325 in 1990 to $28,103 in 2010 an increase of 128% increase over the twenty-year period.
The amelioration of poverty was the lofty goal set by RCCI organizers. The previous figures show the journey from low overall regional rates of adult educational attainment and a college focused only on Uvalde, and not the larger region over twenty years, following RCCI involvement, SWTJC serves a region where education is valued and the quality of life has shown improvement. Poverty rates were discussed in a previous chapter, Figure 4.6, Poverty SWTJC Service Area provides a quick snap shot of all 11 counties in 1990, 2000, and 2010. In 1990, Maverick County had 50% of its people living in poverty. Three other counties had greater that 40% of their population living in poverty: Zavala (49.4%), Dimmit (48.5%), and Edwards (41.4%). Six other counties posted 30% or greater poverty rates. In 1990, the county with the least amount of its population living in poverty was Media at 23.2%. Over the 20-year period, Maverick experienced the greatest improvement, reducing the percentage of its population living in poverty to 29.7% in 2010 from 50% in 1990. Seven of the eleven counties have experienced double digit reductions in their poverty rates. Sadly, Uvalde remains relatively unchanged over
the 20 years, with approximately 30% of its population living in poverty. The little college in Uvalde and for Uvalde has made a tremendous impact on the region it serves however. Overall, the composite percentage of people living in poverty for all 11 counties improved from 37.4% in 1990 to 26.3% in 2010, an improvement of 11.2%.

Figure 4.6

*Percent of Families Living in Poverty in Counties Served by SWTJC, 1990, 2000, and 2010*

Data Source: Southern Rural Development Center
CHAPTER 5:
THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND GOVERNANCE WEB

Introduction

This chapter will analyze how Southwest Texas Junior College evolved their administrative structure over a twenty-year period from 1994 to 2015. As shall be seen, changes needed to accommodate growth and the changes reflect the College’s expanded mission, to develop its internal capacity to become regional. Four specific snapshots of time are evaluated to provide perspective on the College’s changing governance structure. The first, 1994, was the year prior to SWTJC participation in the Rural Community College Initiative. This is followed by the administrative composition in 2002, as the funding for the RCCI came to a close. The final two snapshots of SWTJC’s organization structure encapsulates 2010 and 2015. This chapter includes a close examination of services that the College provides to their state-assigned service area, with specific focus on the relationship between the SWTJC’s main campus in Uvalde and its branch campuses. The chapter concludes by capturing the voices and insights from the College’s leadership.

Prior to SWTJC’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), the College was not viewed as an active player in economic development, locally or regionally. During that period, SWTJC’s primary focus was preparing students for transfer to a four-year university which, given the lack of nearby four-year universities practically meant preparing people to leave. General education coursework took the spotlight, with little attention paid to technical and vocational training. Additionally, the College had limited offerings in the area of workforce training (non-credit). These findings and others were reported by Katsinas (1994) to
the Ford Foundation. Katsinas reported that SWTJC was a College on the brink of a transformation with Ford Foundation support. Community leaders as well as the College’s leadership were prepared to embark on an uncharted journey that would challenge every stakeholder in the region. Apprehension from individuals was not found in the fear of being part of a transformative College. Instead Katsinas found an earnest desire to perform well in positions for which they had no formalized training.

Unfortunately, professional development is one of the first targets when institutional budgets become tight. In 1994, SWTJC’s main campus claimed the title of “Uvalde’s college,” earning its name in part by minimal enrollments at the branch campuses. The need for transformation from “Uvalde’s college for Uvalde” to Southwest Texas Junior College as a truly regional college, was articulated as: “A leadership vacuum has existed in the College’s service area and SWTJC will be assuming this responsibility, not as a domineering organization, but rather as a concerned catalyst for positive progress” (Bennett, 1995, p. 9).

Administrative Structure and Branch Campuses

The right combination of strategy and organizational structure are at the cornerstone of the Rural Community College Initiative’s operating philosophy. Katsinas (1994, p. 5) found SWTJC was ready for a “quantum step” to extend access to higher education. SWTJC experienced a 64% increase in total fall enrollment for the ten years from 3139 in 1994 to 5140 in 2004, which compared favorably to the Texas and U.S. averages of 36.5% and 25.6% respectively. By 2010, SWTJC’s fall enrollment increased by 101% to 6235 since 1994. However, that record enrollment of 6,235 sharply dipped to 5,410 enrolled in 2012-13, 13.2% drop. SWTJC was able to maintain a 72.3% increase over the twenty years from 1994 to 2013, keeping pace with Texas 75.6% and far outpacing enrollment growth nationally (24.7%). This
tremendous increase in enrollment at SWTJC validates the previously constrained access to higher education as presented to Ford Foundation officials when Katsinas aptly noted, “that if the facilities problem were solved that the access problem would be solved (Katsinas S. G., 1994).”

In 1994, SWTJC provided services for eight counties, whereby five counties did not pay property taxes to SWTJC. Revenue derived from property taxes are levied to fund the College’s physical plant maintenance and growth. This is a salient point due to the fact that Texas law does not allow the use of tax money to purchase land or construct facilities in a county where the taxes were not collected. This presented a unique situation where SWTJC must provide services across a vast area (11-counties and 16,712 sq. miles as of 2016) with no means to fund facility construction in an area Texas community colleges refer to as “out-of-district.” This is the exact situation that the Southwest Texas Junior College Foundation was created address under Billy Word’s presidency. This quirk in Texas higher education funding policy placed increased and disproportionate pressure on rural community colleges. For example, SWTJC is required to provide services in Del Rio (Val Verde County) and Eagle Pass (Maverick County), however those counties are not subject to the ad valorem tax imposed by the College. Further, Texas law prohibits SWTJC from using property tax revenue collected in Uvalde, Real, or Zavala Counties to build facilities in the other eight counties. This means no educational services for populations centers like Del Rio and Eagle Pass. Katsinas (1994) noted that despite obvious demand, with 623 students enrolled in 1993, unfortunately the College was unable to build additional facilities to service a clear need for access to higher education. Katsinas in 1994 observed that both Eagle Pass and Del Rio enrollments could reach easily 1000 FTE within 3 to 5 years.

SWTJC’s ability to leverage the Foundation to expand the facilities in Eagle Pass has led to an explosion in enrollment. In 2004-2005 the unduplicated student enrollment of 2048 at
Eagle Pass has actually surpassed the 1971 enrollment of the “main” campus in Uvalde. The trend of SWTJC’s main campus in Uvalde enrolling fewer students than the out-of-district campus of Eagle Pass has continued through 2014-2015. Eagle Pass has enrolled 422 more students than Uvalde’s main campus in 2014-2015 or 27.6% and has remained in the 20% or greater range since 2007-2008. As of 2014-2015, Del Rio has not reached the enrollment numbers at Uvalde, however that location runs a close second. In 2014-2015 the location with the highest enrollment was Eagle Pass at 1,950, followed by Uvalde at 1,528, and then by Del Rio at 1,353. The creation of the SWTJC Foundation provided a financial vehicle to obtain required resources needed to expand access at SWTJC’s physical plant to bring access to higher education to Texas citizens living in rural communities. It should be noted that the requirement to provide services to these rural communities is a State mandate with no funding mechanism. Consequently, the College is forced to think outside-the-box with inside-the-box realities.

Expanding institutional capacity was one of the RCCI’s goals. One of the specialized full-time positions that was originally funded by RCCI was a full-time grant writer. Additional details about grants are discussed in Chapter 7, Financing Growth. Thomas (2005) reported in 1995 grants equated to $5,066,217 or 33% of the College’s operating budget. By 2004 the College had received grants that equated to 44% or $12,454,787 of a $28,347,997 operating budget. Over a decade after the RCCI program has ended the percentage of the operating budget provided by grants has remained steady at 43% or $15,075,219 of a $35,600,110 operating budget in 2014. Grant funding becomes critically important to backfill shrinking tax appropriations from the State of Texas. One-third of SWTJC’s revenue in 1994 was derived from State appropriations, this has dwindled to a mere one-fourth of SWTJC’s revenue in 2014. Expanding access to education encompasses more than just money for buildings. The most
critical resource for any business is the people it employs. This is especially true in education where it can be quite complex to hire and retain qualified individuals to lead in rural community colleges outside of their own communities.

A close examination of SWTJC’s organizational charts from 1994 to 2015 demonstrates the transformation of the College’s reporting structure and resource alignment to become more regionalized. Appendix D provides an illustration of Southwest Texas Junior College’s Organizational Chart 2000-2001 as described by Thomas (2005):

In 1994, the administration of SWTJC was led by the President as chief executive officer, and four deans, with responsibilities for Admissions and Student Services, Community Services, Instructional Services, and Business and Fiscal Affairs. There were eight divisions of instruction inside the college: Business, Applied Science, Humanities and Fine Arts, Library, Science and Math, Social Studies and Physical Education, the Del Rio Center, and the Eagle Pass Center. In 1994, persons with the title director led the following administrative areas: Administrative Services, Upward Bound, Student Activities, Financial Aid, Computer Center, Physical Plant Operations, and Food Service. The Law Enforcement Academy and the Institutional Research Office were led by coordinators. In 1993, an Institutional Effectiveness Officer was added. In 1994, SWTJC was staffed by 71 full-time professional faculty, 54 support staff members, 23 building and ground maintenance employees, 17 food service personnel, 2 dormitory supervisors, 4 Deans, and the President, adding to a total of 172 full-time College employees (SWTJC Agency Strategic Plan, pp. 10-11, 1994-2000).

The 2000-2001 organizational chart represents the structure for SWTJC from 1996 through the final years of SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI. According to Thomas (2005), the College’s
tremendous growth in enrollment produced a more complex administrative structure that began to specialize in certain areas. Appendix E, *Southwest Texas Junior College Organizational Chart, 2003-2004* represents SWTJC’s structure two years after funding for the RCCI had ended. The College’s 64% increase in enrollment was reflected in the added number of additional faculty members, support staff, and administrators. In 1994, prior to SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI, the College employed a total of 172 full-time employees. This grew to 324 in 2004, representing an increase of 88%. From 1994 to 2004, key leadership adjusted slightly, with a new president and a reduction from four deans to three deans and the addition of four division/department heads bring the total to nine by 2004. Thomas (2005) documented new positions at the College as a direct response to its participation in RCCI:

The College added several new administrative and professional positions in direct response to its participation in RCCI. With the receipt of its initial RCCI implementation grant funding from the Ford Foundation, the position of Dean of Technology and Institutional Advancement was added in 1996, a position which Blaine Bennett has served since its creation. This new position was needed in response to the explosion of technology that occurred at the College in response to RCCI activities, including the SWTnet Consortium of 22 area high school districts, video conferencing, and Internet classes. The College’s first Institutional Research Coordinator was added, in order to better document the College’s programs and activities under RCCI. Today, Mrs. Carol LaRue heads up the Institutional Effectiveness activities of the College. A third key position directly added as a result of RCCI funding was an Institutional Resource Coordinator; that person, Susan McCormick, is the College’s only full-time grant
writer, another area of weakness improved through RCCI participation. A Public
Information Officer, Willie Edwards, a first for SWTJC, was added as RCCI participation
necessitated the hiring of specialized expertise to assist the College in marketing itself regionally. Finally, the College added a Workforce Training and Development Director, Romelia Aranda, who is based at the Eagle Pass Campus. The five-fold increase in workforce training credits, from about 20,000 to about 100,000 in ten years resulted directly from investments made possible by SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI (Thomas, 2005, pp. 127-128).

Interviews with key college official revealed that the adjustment from four to three Dean’s was a difficult institutional decision. The College had little choice when it received the resignation of the Dean of Business and Fiscal Affairs due to reduced State appropriations with the end of RCCI funding in 2002 and reduced State appropriations, this small rural college was forced to do without the Dean of Business and Fiscal Affairs. The State of Texas further mandated that all community colleges give back 7.5% of previously appropriated state monies. Since the 7.5% cut was to annual state appropriations in a year half over, the cut of what remained was much greater than 7.5%, resulting in a much larger pain point for some Texas community colleges. At that time, the other three deans agreed to absorb the additional work and a lower-level manager was hired to supervise the daily activity of the business support staff.
Figure 5.1

Southwest Texas Junior College Organizational Chart 2009-2010

Data Source: Southwest Texas Junior College Public Website
By 2010, SWTJC’s organizational structure changed slightly overall with one highlighted exception. The top of the organization is still led by one president and three deans. However, the roles of Associate Dean for Eagle Pass and Del Rio are absent. Student services is now in grouping under the Dean of Admissions & Student Services, and there is no box labeled Admissions or Human Resources that was not visible in 2010.

The most significant adjustment that signals regionalism as a focus for SWTJC leadership is found in the third level of the organization where the “campus” becomes its own entity and the use of the term “outreach center” to describe their locations at Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Crystal City, Pearsall, and Hondo is used. Although the 2010 organizational chart no longer expresses the title of Director, there is one and only one displayed, with the title of Outreach Director. Noting that the organizational structure is analogous to the skeletal bones in the human body by providing the framework for which everything else is built around, the College’s special emphasis on expanding access to higher education in its region. This is demonstrated by a framework that recognizes its five outreach centers. Additionally, the College has placed Student Success Centers prominently on the 2010 organizational chart. The Dean of Instruction has added Chief Financial Officer to its title and has assumed the overall responsibilities related to the Outreach and Student Success Centers as well. This adjustment in organizational structure placed a very large portion of the institution under one individual. This role was previously being filled by SWTJC’s future President, Hector Gonzales.
Figure 5.2

Southwest Texas Junior College Organizational Chart 2014-2015

Data Source: Southwest Texas Junior College Public Website
SWTJC’s 2015 organizational chart reflects new elevated positions that carry the title of Vice President. The top level of SWTJC in early 2015 reflected a structure with one President, five Vice Presidents, and three Deans. Although the titles of “Director” are no longer listed, a quick search for “Director” on SWTJC online directory responded with 16 individuals with Director in their title. Careful analysis of organizational charts for SWTJC during 1994, 2004, 2010, and 2015 demonstrates how this local community college continues to transform its structure to meet the contemporary regional educational requirements. over the 1994 figure of 172.

By the end of the 2015 academic year, the total number of full-time employees has grown to 440, representing a 36% increase from the 2004 figure of 324, and a 156% increase over the 1994 figure of 172. Additionally, there are 130 part-time employees providing a total of 570 employees that work in 17 different locations within the SWTJC’s 11 county state-assigned service area. SWTJC’s cadre of full-time faculty grew from 71 in 1994 to 120 in 2015, an increase of 70%. The increase in faculty closely mirrored the enrollment growth from 1994 to 2015 of 72%. Growth within the areas of building maintenance and food service remains flat between 1994 (40) and 2015 (39), so it appears at least in this area the college is doing more with less.

Organizational charts for SWTJC in the past had placed the role of deans reporting directly to the President. This has since been replaced with the role of vice president. This change does not infer the role of dean has diminished, but instead has become more focused in their core institutional academic function, such as nursing and health sciences or engineering and mathematics. These areas of study are organized into schools whereby the Dean is responsible for administrative responsibilities specific to that school. This includes budget and resource
responsibilities such as hiring and scheduling faculty as well as policy and curriculum responsibility. A dean’s primary responsibility is to the academic discipline for which they are assigned. Unlike a dean, the role of vice president is organized around institutional finance and operational services and not by academic departments. Simply stated, vice presidents have college-wide oversight responsibilities, while deans focus on academics and administrative oversight specific to one or more disciplines. The role of a vice presidents with college-wide oversight is echoed during a personal interview of SWTJC’s Vice President at the Del Rio campus, “… officially I am a Vice President for Southwest Texas Junior College, but my role is the director of the Del Rio Campus” (Sandavol, 2016). As with many other organizations and businesses alike, when they are small in size, employees have a myriad of duties and wear multiple hats, usually being considered a “jack of all trades, master of none.” When the College was relatively small in enrollment, the role of dean was defined as stated above. They could have been considered vice presidents, without the title or pay, yet still possessing all the responsibility of the vice presidents of today.

However, the College has grown by 72% in fall enrollment from 1994 to 2013. A significant amount of that growth occurred along the Texas and Mexico border outside of SWTJC’s taxing district but inside the service area (considered “out-of-district”). SWTJC’s growth across the region has allowed it to begin to specialize their resources moving from “jack of all trades, master of none” to Deans that focus on academics and Vice Presidents that focus on operational excellence. The appointment of Vice Presidents and the construction of new facilities in Del Rio and Eagle Pass provides visual context to the citizens living in those areas of the commitment that Southwest Texas Junior College possesses for the region, especially because these locations are considered “out-of-district.” Vice President Sandoval expressed it this way,
“…We used to have portables (building), and two and a half years ago these buildings were built. A large, academic building, this new administration building, and it opened eyes in the community. So with the development of our new campus the administration building and a brand new academic building… that I believe …showed to the community that the College…could play a greater role in their child’s education…. It was a commitment from the college to the community… (Pause)... I think we can go back and look at numbers, our enrollment is up, and I am going to blame the new buildings.

(Sandavol, 2016)

SWTJC hired its first Chief Information Officer (CIO), Raul Reyes, Jr., on January 4, 2016. Reyes was hired as the CIO and Public Relations Officer as well. According to article written by Kim Eagle (2016), Reyes grew up in Del Rio, graduating high school in 1988 and earning his Bachelor of Science from Angelo State University. Reyes spent nearly 22 years in the U.S. Air Force retiring as Division Chief in the Communications Department in Cyber Operations. By May of 2016, Reyes was promoted to Vice President for Administrative Services, retaining the Chief Information Officer title as well. Figure 5.2 represents the organizational adjustments that occurred in May of 2016. Appendix F, *Southwest Texas Junior College Organizational Chart 2014-2015 (v.1)*, provides a view of the organization prior to Reyes’ promotion. This promotion raises the total of Vice Presidents to six. In 2016, both the Del Rio campus and Eagle Pass have Vice Presidents dedicated to them. The position of Vice President in Del Rio and Eagle Pass is meant to characterize the value that those locations have within the administrative and governance web of the College.
Voices of the College’s Leadership

Ten years after Thomas’ visit and twenty years after Katsinas’ visit, the College has grown in many ways. Katsinas examined an area of the nation that was ripe with potential, but lacked the capacity to effect lasting change in the region. One of the key findings reported by Katsinas to the Ford Foundation was that, “the three communities, Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass have rarely been involved in any comprehensive economic development planning efforts (Katsinas, 1994, p. 7).” This researcher interviewed SWTJC leaders in 2016, and has found the entire team focused on the region’s success, one student at a time. Many of the individuals interviewed in 1994 by Katsinas and in 2005 by Thomas have retired or no longer work for the College. Over the past twenty years, the one thing that has remained the same is the commitment of SWTJC’s entire team to their region. Many of them are born and raised in the Southwest Texas region, most in Uvalde, TX. Spending time with SWTJC’s leadership quickly reveals the pride they have for Southwest Texas and their junior college.

Thomas (2005) provided insights from College employees about the role they played during the College’s participation in the RCCI. Blaine Bennett served as the Dean of Institutional Advancement and Technology when Thomas interviewed him in 2004. Bennett’s primary role was being responsible for not only providing technical solutions for the College, but also finding ways to pay for them. Bennett was a long-time administrator for SWTJC and has since separated employment with the College. Bennett was considered a champion for the momentum that the RCCI provided, but expressed concerns to Thomas about the College’s ability to finance the operations of the College when using grants as the primary fuel source. It is important to note that between 2001 and 2014, the College had been awarded a little more than $28 million in
grant funding. The College had submitted a total of 76 grant applications and were awarded 53 of them or 70%.

The first full-time researcher hired for SWTJC in 1994 was Dr. Mitchell Burchfield. Dr. Burchfield remains employed at the College in 2016, serving as the Division Chair for Developmental Studies, he remains active as a professor in the classroom. The researcher was able to attend several functions of the College where Dr. Burchfield was present, and it was easy to see that he is well respected among his peers. As a part of the RCCI’s process, the requirement to understand institutional data is a key element. Burchfield’s return to teaching left behind the task of data analysis to Carol Larue, the second person to hold this position. Hiring a full-time researcher was a requirement from the Ford Foundation in anticipation of expanding services to the region. According to Thomas (2015), Carol Larue was the one individual who broke the mold of a majority of SWTJC employees. Most SWTJC employees are from the region and many of them have risen through the ranks, like Dr. Hector Gonzales the current President of SWTJC. Thomas describes his time with Larue this way:

Prior to her arrival at SWTJC in 2003, she worked in the Institutional Effectiveness Office at Del Mar College, a community college in Corpus Christi, Texas. Ms. LaRue had no staff directly under her, and was therefore a one-woman shop. She also was one of the very few people interviewed by the author who had not been promoted from within the College's ranks, coming from the outside, and who did not have deep family ties to the Middle Grande region of Texas (it will be interesting to learn, ten years from now, if the College diversifies its ranks by making significant hires from outside the region). Ms. LaRue believes her presence has helped to change the College’s mindset about institutional effectiveness (IE). She said she treaded lightly in her first year at the
College; she let people get to know who she is, and now was ready to propose changes and improve IE at SWTJC. (Thomas, 2005, p. 142)

One of the ways that Larue is like the others is that, she commutes about an hour each way to work, living in a small hamlet name Utopia. Larue is easy to work with and sincerely enjoys telling a story along with the data.

Another position hired as a result of SWTJC participation in the RCCI was that of a public relations officer (Thomas, 2005). Willie Edwards was hired to handle the new “regional” image the College was attempting to reach. Mr. Edwards is no longer employed by the College, but was then responsible for all public relations activities as well as maintaining the web presence for the SWTJC’s Campuses of Uvalde, Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and Crystal City. Mr. Edwards had recently worked for Uvalde High School as well as the Uvalde newspaper (Uvalde Leader-News). Working as the Public Information Officer for the College seemed like the next logical step in his career. Edwards was responsible for every modality to communicate SWTJC’s regional message. It is not a common practice to find a colleges public relations director to oversee the student run newspaper.

One American idiom that definitely applies to community college leaders in small rural communities is the requirement to “wear many hats.” Unfortunately, while wearing many hats might provide short term success, it can have a detrimental long-term effect, leading to a lack of deep focus in a single aspect and, eventually, employee burnout. In his interview with Thomas, Edwards said “I could spend every hour of every day doing nothing but updating the website for the four campuses, and still not get everything up on them” (Thomas, 2005, p. 142). The potential negative result for the College is the potential slow morphing of a public relations
Derek Sandoval is the Vice President of SWTJC with a focus on Del Rio Campus. Sandoval speaks with authority and a great amount of respect toward each person he encounters. During the interview with Sandoval it was not difficult to determine that his priority and focus consistently remained on the success of the community he serves. Sandoval noted his journey to Vice President of SWTJC began 17 years ago in Uvalde, where he taught physical education. Sandoval received his graduate degree in 1995, and became an instructor for SWTJC the same year. He served as Department Chair from 2007 to 2013, and afterwards was then promoted to Associate Vice President in March of 2013 with the primary responsibility of the Del Rio campus. The Associate Vice Presidents of Eagle Pass and Del Rio have dropped the “associate” in their respective titles. The titles were adjusted to Vice President two years ago.

Sandoval lives in Uvalde and makes the drive to Del Rio every morning, completing approximately 140 miles round-trip, or 2,800 miles per month. Sandoval noted that the drive gave him the opportunity to shed the work-related issues during the hour drive home so that when he arrives home he is able to focus on being a great husband and father. “I get to drive out to the country every day that I head to work,” he says. Sandoval does not let the distance between where he lives and where he works interfere with his community engagement. Of course being the Vice President for the College, his responsibilities encompass all SWTJC business but he has a specific focus on Del Rio.

Sandoval remains engaged in several Del Rio community organizations that provide him greater visibility for the College as a community leader. He is currently a member of a Community Health Improvement Coalition (CHIC) that provides health education and organizes
events like a 5K family walk-run. The Coalition meets monthly to focus on specific combined actions as determined and prioritized by and for the community. A few examples of the work done by CHIC are initiating Del Rio’s no smoking ordinance, coordinating interagency meetings, creating the HOPE cancer resource room, and raising funds to renovate city parks, provide kids’ swimming lessons, bicycle helmets for kids, coats for kids, and gas cards for cancer survivors. Sandoval’s involvement with this one organization provides a great amount of visibility to the College, providing a sense of inclusion for SWTJC with Del Rio citizens. One exciting event is the bike rodeo that takes place in Del Rio.

The visibility of SWTJC’s commitment to this “out-of-district” location in Del Rio is realized by the investments the College is making in the construction of new buildings. Three years ago the community of Del Rio may have viewed SWTJC’s commitment as temporary since they operated out of portable buildings. In 2016, there is a large academic building and a new administration building that creates a campus look and feel to SWTJC’s Del Rio Campus. The expanded physical plant demonstrates the commitment by the College to the community of Del Rio and demonstrates that the College has the capacity to play a greater role in their children’s education (Sandavol, 2016).

Sandoval works closely with the superintendent of the local independent school district (ISD). He considers their roles require them to become pillars of the community. Sandoval has a firm belief that accomplishing one’s goals requires access to higher education. The community in Del Rio places their faith in the independent school district and the college district to have their best interests in mind when making important decisions and investments for their children’s future. Sandoval understands that a collaborative professional relationship with the Del Rio CISD is paramount, as “we both value and we both understand that in the community our close
cooperation is needed...once again as I tried to share with you we’re trying to teach and preach that an education is the vehicle to accomplishing goals (Sandavol, 2016).” An example of the cooperative relationship within the region is demonstrated by the development of the Aviation Maintenance Program created for a need identified by nearby Laughlin Air Force Base that has now graduated 24 students with 17 receiving full-time employment at Laughlin. Sandoval explains the role of SWTJC in the community as follows:

“I think we understand our role, we’re a community college, we teach the courses that people need. We’re trying to get them into the workforce, can’t always guarantee them jobs, but our job is to teach, our job is to educate, our job is to provide certificates on the technical side.” (Sandavol, 2016)

Because of the Del Rio CISD’s superintendent and the Vice President of SWTJC have formed a close working relationship, there are many synergies that exist, especially when it comes to sharing access of expensive equipment and resources. Sandoval provides the example that the ISD has a Certified Nursing Assistant program at the high school leading directly into the Licensed Vocational Nurse and the Registered Nurse programs at SWTJC. The ISD also has a welding program that would go unused in the evenings if the College did not take advantage of the availability of the equipment. Additionally, the ISD is in the middle of building a large technology facility that will become dormant every evening unless there is a cooperative spirit and regional approach to provide an avenue for the high school students to learn during the day and for the community college to teach technical programs at night.

Sandoval’s last comment during the interview was to praise Dr. Gonzales for his leadership and opportunity to serve the College. Sandoval appreciated the fact that Gonzales never pulls back on the reins but instead asks them to “think about it.” He also noted that the
Gilbert Bermea represents a second generation of Bermea’s working for SWTJC at Eagle Pass. His father worked for SWTJC for 35 years and is now retired. Bermea has experienced the College through the eyes of his father and now through his own,

“I’m just super proud of the fact that as recently as 1983, there was virtually nothing here and now you can see the infrastructure, and the oldest building on this campus, is twenty years old and the previous one-stop was an office, and two classrooms, was built in eighty-two. The College has grown from virtually dust to the present…you know?”

(Bermea, 2016)

Much like Del Rio, Eagle Pass recently opened new facilities in spring of 2016, with its Library and Academic Building. Buildings at Eagle Pass Campus are identified by a letter of the alphabet starting with A, or B, or C, and so on. However, there is one building that does not carry
a letter designation, the building carries the name Bermea. Gilbert Bermea was quick to let me know that the building was named after his father who had worked for the College in Eagle Pass for 35 years before retiring at the age of 80. Jokingly, but semi-seriously Bermea stated, “…named after my dad, he was hired when nothing was here, so he had to establish it.” In 1994, there were two buildings at the Eagle Pass campus, one named after Bermea’s father and its twin named Building B. By 1998, Eagle Pass added another building that would function as their classroom and library facility. Around 2000, the College constructed a second building to lease to Sul Ross and it is co-located with Eagle Pass. The year 2005 produced two additional facilities known as the Administrative Building and a Technical Building (E).

SWTJC’s commitment to serving the region seems to possess little boundaries on creativity. Not every program is offered at every campus and frankly not every program fits at every location according to the communities need. During his interview, Bermea indicated that with the opening of the new Technology Center they would finally be able to offer welding in Eagle Pass. Until the Technology Center opens, students that have a desire to participate in the welding program would have to make the 120 mile round trip to Uvalde. Distance might present an insurmountable obstacle to rural citizens attempting to attend College. This situation is remedied by SWTJC due to the fact they provide vans to get students to certain programs. Bermea (2016), explained “actually, we transport people.” The College has several vans and they provide transportation to students that are in Eagle Pass to the Uvalde campus for Radiographic Technology X-ray program and welding and other programs. When the researcher asked about the distance of that transport, Bermea stated it was a drive of sixty miles one way… “same amount I drive” (says while laughing). Bermea agrees with Sandoval that their President understands the needs and requirements of the people serviced by SWTJC’s state-assigned area.
Colleges, like many corporations, require a CEO that understands the product and has a great vision for the future. The researcher interviewed several faculty and administrators and all of them appeared energized about the direction of the College and what it has to offer the community now, and in the future. Dr. Hector Gonzales has served in the role of President since August 1, 2013, shortly after earning his Ph.D. from the University of the Incarnate Word. Dr. Gonzales serves as another great example of how the College has created an environment that has the ability to “grow” its own. Hired in 1999 as the Director of the Business Office, he would serve in that role for approximately 5 years. Thomas (2005) documented Gonzales’ ascension to the presidency from when he stepped up for the College in a big way when they were forced to forgo the replacement of one of the deans due to state budget cuts. This is when Gonzales was promoted to Dean of Instructional Services and Chief Financial Officer (p. 129).

Gonzales was born and raised in Uvalde, where his family owned several small businesses. He received his Bachelor’s degree from Angelo State University in accounting and returned home to help the family business for three years. According to Thomas (2005), this was the verbal agreement from Gonzales to his father, “Dad look, you gave me three years of help and support, so I’m going to do the same for you (p. 155).” Gonzales wasted no time and while working in the family business he received his Master’s in Business Administration degree from Sul Ross Rio Grande College. Gonzales also served as an adjunct professor for seven years for Sul Ross. Gonzales has also held a Certified Public Accountant license since 1997.

Dr. Gonzales arrived at SWTJC while the RCCI activities were already in full motion and his exposure was very limited. However, the water-cooler conversations of then President Sosa, Blain Bennett, and Dr. Burchfield had reached his ears and he understood the value the Ford Foundation was bringing to the College. Gonzales explained his exposure to the RCCI when he
was hired, “… as far as giving it (SWTJC) more region life, and coming off of that it helped expand our distance learning network with the districts. You know that’s the kind of information that I had, you know from where I sat in the beginning (Gonzales, 2016).” Although Gonzales did not participate directly with the RCCI, he definitely embodies the idea that the community college must serve the community and think regionally, which is a key element of the RCCI. The key to success in rural areas are strong partnerships. Gonzales works closely with the business community, the ISD superintendents, and Sul Ross to list a few. A perfect example of how Gonzales executed one of his key pillars of leadership (strong partnerships) when he worked with Sul Ross leadership to help adjust the paradigm of SWTJC students versus Sul Ross students. Gonzales recalls that 10 years ago working with their sister institution of Sul Ross, “… they had their students, we had our students and finally about five years ago they had change in administration and we were able to really elevate the partnership when we realized, we’re talking about “our” students. Your students are my students; my students are your students. We’re talking about the same students. When they leave my campus, they walk across and they are on your campus. We’re talking about the same students and that concept we’ve expanded it to the partnership. This is our community, not theirs we want to be part of it, we want to be partners.” (Gonzales, 2016)

President Gonzales is serious and committed to remaining connected to the region SWTJC serves. Whether its connecting social responsibility in the classroom or whether it is written into everyone’s job description at SWTJC, President Gonzales has created an organizational framework that not only encourages community involvement, it makes it worthwhile for all future generations.
“… for example, psychology classes, the students have to as a part of the introduction to psychology course they have to come up with a 24-hour service project for the semester. That they go out and fulfill, their social responsibility, and it gives them a mechanism and it gives us a mechanism, to get those students involved in the communities. So, in that aspect we bring the curriculum within the curriculum, we bring in those certain attributes to our students (Gonzales, 2016).”

Many of the college employees are actively serving in the community on school boards, chamber of commerce boards, youth soccer and little league boards. Gonzales has set the bar high for community involvement for the employees of SWTJC. Everybody has a requirement of 16 hours of community service per semester or 32 hours per year. How or where a college employee chooses to serve is irrelevant to the spirit of the requirement to provide community service from Gonzales’s perspective. Many times parents and grandparents that work for SWTJC are already involved in the children and grandchildren’s lives by way of being a coach for a soccer team or a little league baseball team. Gonzales did not rule out any possibility of an activity that involves community that would be considered as fulfillment of the community responsibility clause at SWTJC, “… participating in a church choir, whatever it is, I want my employees engaged in the communities they serve (Gonzales, 2016).”
CHAPTER 6:
THE CURRICULUM AND FACULTY

Introduction

The RCCI remained centered on two critical goals, increasing access to education and improving the regional economy. During SWTJC’s participation with the Rural Community College Initiative beginning in 1995, the College redeployed its energy into reversing the trend of low educational attainment that continually plagued this rural south Texas region. The low educational attainment was described by SWTJC’s 1994 RCCI Implementation Grant Proposal (May 22, 1994), when it was reported that the region’s population possess only 9.6 years of education attained, and an even lower rate for its Hispanic population at 6.4 years. Census data from 2010-2014 shows 81.6% of Texas citizens 25 years or older possess a high school diploma or higher and 27.1% of the population holds a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Real and Medina counties report roughly the same number of citizens with high school or higher educational attainment. All other counties have approximately 60% or more of their population graduating high school. SWTJC’s incredible 72.3% surge in enrollment from 1994 to 2003 was discussed in Chapter 3, as compared to the 47.6% realized nationwide. This chapter will examine Southwest Texas Junior College’s 20-year journey from 1994, prior to participating in the RCCI, to 2013 more than a decade after the program ended, describing both qualitatively and quantitatively the changes experienced by SWTJC in terms of an expanded curriculum, an increase in faculty, and concluding with faculty voices.
Expanded Curriculum

One of the primary outcomes of the RCCI was to become more regionally minded. The Ford Foundation targeted areas within the United States where the people have lived for decades in poverty with little hope for anything different in their future in order to plant the seeds of change. Most agree that attaining an education has the potential to boost their earning income. Degrees and certificates are one way that employers sift out the wheat from the chaff when determining who they will hire and who they will not.

Southwest Texas Junior College has conferred a record number of degrees and certificates in its state-assigned service area over the past twenty years. Table 6.1 “Total Degrees and Certificates Awarded from 1994-95 to 2013-14.” shows the exponential growth in degrees and certifications completion at SWTJC. The year prior to SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI program reflects a total of 280 degrees and certificates awarded providing 147 academic degrees, 54 technical degrees, and 79 technical certificates. From 1995 until 2002 the number of awarded degrees or certificates ranged in the 300’s yearly during its participation with the RCCI. Chris Thomas (2005) reported a new institutional record in 2003-04 of 589 degrees or certificates awarded at in the 2005-06 academic year, the College would reach a new institutional record of 729 degrees and certificates awarded. Since that time, the College continued to award degrees and certificates in the 600 range each year through 2009-10. By 2013-14, SWTJC would set another institutional record of 814 degrees and certificates awarded. SWTJC continues to demonstrate that an increasing number of individuals in the SWTJC stat-assigned service area are receiving expanded educational access and opportunities. The College has increased the number of degrees and certificates awarded since 1994 (280) to 2014 (814) by 191%.
Table 6.1
Total Degrees and Certificates Awarded at Southwest Texas Junior College from 1994-95 to 2013-14

The 814 degrees and certificates awarded in 2013-14 consisted of 444 academic degrees, 92 technical degrees, and 278 technical certificates. Table 6.2 “Comparing Total Degrees and Certificates awarded by Type at SWTJC during 1994-2004, 2005-2010, 2011-2014, and 1994-2014,” provides insight into the delta of four significant time periods relevant to this study. The first period extends from 1994 to 2004, representing the year prior to SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI up until a few years after the program completed, and Thomas’s 2005 study. The second period extends from 2005 to 2010. The third time period, 2011-2014, represents the most current data available. Finally, the fourth period of time, 1994 to 2014, provides a twenty-year overall view from before participation in the RCCI to more than 10 years post participation.

Academic and Technical degrees increased by 127% and 130%, respectively, from 1994-2004,
with Technical Certificates increasing at half the same rate of degrees awarded (67%) during the same time period.

Table 6.2

*Comparing Total Degrees and Certificates awarded by Type, Southwest Texas Junior College, 1994 to 2004, 2005 to 2010, 2011 to 2014, 1994 to 2014*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>(+/-) Degrees/Certificates Awarded</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Degrees</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Degrees</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Certificates</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Fact Book 2003, 2007-2010 and SWTJC IR Department

The six-year period from 2004-2010 after the conclusion of SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI, saw only a small increase in academic degrees of 6%, and a dramatic 20% decrease in the number of technical degrees awarded. Additionally, technical certifications awarded increased by 73% increase from 1994 to 2003. The most current four-year period from 2011-2014, SWTJC increased the number of academic degrees awarded by 26%, and even while technical degrees decreased by 7% compared to the previous time period. Again, technical certifications had increased by 22% since the previous time period of 2004-2010. From 1994 to 2014 SWTJC increased the number of academic degrees awarded by 297, representing a 202% increase over the past 20 years. During the same time period technical degrees awarded lost their initial momentum but remained at a solid 70% increase. The most significant increase in awards are in technical certificates. SWTJC experienced a 252% increase in the number of technical certificates award since 1994. Although the number of academic and technical degrees and certificates combined represent an increase of 167% increase, special attention is drawn to the
slow and stagnate growth in technical degrees. The RCCI appears to have been successful in looking to increase technical degrees and technical certificates awarded at SWTJC.

Since 1974, Texas has provided appropriations to community college districts based upon the concept of “full formula funding.” Additionally, state appropriations for community colleges are provided every other year. According to Donald C. Hudson’s 2008 dissertation, “A Policy Analysis of Community College Funding in Texas,” funding for community colleges is provided by a formula funding model. Hudson (2008) provided the following analysis for community college funding in Texas:

Based upon the analysis of state funds and other revenue sources, several conclusions were reached, including: 1) during the pre-formula period (1942-1973), state funds were provided solely as an instructional supplement to public community colleges. This was known as the sufficient-to-supplement policy; 2) there has been an agreement between the State of Texas and the community colleges regarding community college funding as the formula system was implemented. The state would fund instruction and the college districts would pay for facilities; 3) The proportion of Texas community college operating revenues from the state has decreased relative to the other sources of revenue available to community colleges; 4) Full formula funding is a concept that is much discussed among Texas community college leaders. However, it has never been realized in the history of funding Texas public community colleges; 5) “Sufficient-to-supplement” is not an adequate or meaningful policy for funding community colleges in Texas. (Hudson, 2008, pp. vii, viii)

From 1990-91 to 2012-13 there has been a steep decline in funding levels for community colleges by the State. For example, full formula funding for community colleges in the 1990-91
biennium was $1,262,625,068, however the actual appropriations for the 1990-91 biennium was $959,848,172 or 76% of full formula funding. This represents a $302,776,896 shortfall to community colleges needed to supplement instructional cost. Chapter 7, *Financing Growth*, will examine the funding model in more detail. Nevertheless, the College is providing expanded access to educational opportunities within its region as evidenced by the data in Table 6.2 despite the shortage in State dollars.

Becoming a regional college requires easy access to programs and services offered by the College. As a part of the *Moving from Vision to Action* workbook provided by the RCCI program team the College was required to provide relevant programs that met the needs of the communities it served. In 1994, the College offered twelve degrees and certificate programs. The general studies degree was the primary degree attainable from locations of Del Rio and Eagle Pass. The only other program offered outside of Uvalde was the Management program in Del Rio. Additionally, the AAS/Certificate for Administrative Information Technology, Child Development, and Criminal Justice – Law Enforcement provided partial delivery at Del Rio and Eagles Pass.

By 2005, the College was offering 25 degree programs with only seven solely offered at the Uvalde campus. SWTJC was able to expand delivery of degrees beyond Uvalde to Del Rio and Eagle Pass for Business, Computer Science, Criminal Justice, Engineering, Early Childhood – Grade 4, Early Childhood Specialist, Grade 8-12, Child Development, Computer Information Systems, Homeland Security, Management, Nursing, and Teachers Aide. This expansion beyond Uvalde allows the College to offer 60% of all available degrees to be fully completed outside of the Uvalde campus. Additionally, the Administrative Information Technology
program and the Criminal Justice program are two programs that were partially delivered in
Eagle Pass and Del Rio.

This expansion of programs available to students outside of the Uvalde campus clearly
sets SWTJC as a strong regional College. By 2010, the College was offering 28 degree programs
and eight of those are only available in Uvalde. New programs since 2005 are a Teaching degree
and a Registered Nurse degree, both of which are offered in Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass.
Additionally, Administrative Information Technology and Criminal Justice Law Enforcement
that had previously provided only “partial” degree programs at Del Rio and Eagles Pass in 1994
and 2005 are, by 2010, fully attainable in Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagles Pass. Other program
additions included Radiologic Technology at the Uvalde campus and a certificate in Carpentry at
the Briscoe Unit. The Briscoe Unit, named for the late two-time Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe,
is a state prison located in Frio County not too far from Dilley, Texas. Southwest Texas Junior
College provides degree and certificate completion for eighteen (64%) of the twenty-eight
programs in 2010 at three primary locations of Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagles Pass. As of 2010, the
AAS for a Career Pilot program is no longer offered at SWTJC and Eagle Pass no longer offers
the Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration program.

Thorough analysis of SWTJC most recent catalog (2014) finds that Homeland Security,
Teacher Aide, and Agribusiness programs are no longer offered. SWTJC’s Associates of Arts
degree in teaching reorganized and adjusted to a broader offering. For example, Early Childhood
– Grade 4 is no longer offered but Early Childhood – Grade 6 is now available as shown in Table
6.3. Degree and certification programs added by 2014 include, International Management, Auto-
body Repair Technician, Cosmetology Instructor and Management, Public Administration
Specialty. As of 2014, SWTJC offers 29 degrees and/or certificates, providing 52% of them at
the three largest campuses in Eagle Pass, Uvalde, and Del Rio. Comparatively, that is a 141% increase in programs offered from 1994 when the College offered a total of 12 programs. The regional expanse moved from only one program offered at multiple locations in 1994 (general education) to having 17 programs offered outside of Uvalde’s campus by 2014. SWTJC has significantly increased access to a majority of the degrees and certificates it offers. This exponential expansion in degrees and certificates offered by the College further defines the success in the College’s attempt to expand access to the region, which is one of the core outcomes hoped for when participating in the RCCI program.
Table 6.3

Programs offered at Southwest Texas Junior College by Campus in 1994 to 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Early Childhood - Grade 6</td>
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<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U,DR,EP</td>
</tr>
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<td>4-8, EC-12 Special Education</td>
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<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U,DR,EP</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-12 - EC-12 Other than Special Education</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U,DR,EP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAS Agriservice</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/AAS Business</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Air Conditioning &amp; Refrigeration</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U,EP</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Automotive Body Repair Tech</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/AAS Automotive Body Repair Tech</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Automotive Technology</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Career Pilot</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Carpenter</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>BU</td>
<td>BU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Cosmetology</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Cosmetology- Instructor</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC International Management</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U,DR,EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/AAS Management, Public Administration Specialty</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Radiologic Technology</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Registered Nurse</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U,DR,EP</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
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<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Teacher Aid</td>
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<td>U,DR,EP</td>
<td>U,DR,EP</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Welding</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
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<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert/ESC Wildlife Management</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations**

Cert - Certificate
ESC - Enhanced Skills Certificate
U - Uvalde
DR - Del Rio
EP - Eagle Pass
DR-P - Del Rio Partial
EP-P - Eagle Pass Partial
BU - Briscoe Unit

Data Source: SWTJC Institutional Research and 2014 Online Catalog
Offering programs to the 11-county state-assigned service area is only one part of the equation. SWTJC success in becoming a regional college that offers programs that their community needs are validated by the number and type of degrees and certificates conferred. The breakdown of degrees and certificates awarded from 1998 to 2014 by program are listed in Table 6.4. Over time, the federal Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes, have been adjusted by the State, Table 6.4 reflects the most current classifications and descriptions for programs delivered at Southwest Texas Junior College. There are a few programs that in previous charts stood apart from “general studies” but now are included within that count. For example, Elementary Education was previously not included in the general studies count. Prior to participating in the RCCI, SWTJC was considered a campus to receive “the basics” and then transfer to a University where they would attempt to earn a Bachelor’s degree. Thus, one of the goals for SWTJC was to create more targeted programs that had the potential to benefit the region economically and provide a means whereby local citizens were not required to take on the burden of moving away from their home area to receive an opportunity at a better life. Also, these are important data points to consider as the State of Texas now has an appropriation model for community colleges that partially compensates the college based on completers.
Table 6.4

*All Degrees and Certifications Awarded at Southwest Texas Junior College from 1998-99 to 2013-14*

| Administrative Information Technology | 98-99 | 00-01 | 01-02 | 02-03 | 03-04 | 04-05 | 05-06 | 06-07 | 07-08 | 08-09 | 09-10 | 10-11 | 11-12 | 12-13 | 13-14 | Total Awards |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
|                                      | 17    | 20    | 21    | 11    | 17    | 21    | 18    | 20    | 15    | 10    | 15    | 12    | 7     | 10    | 15    | 9     | 238         |
| Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Technology | 11    | 22    | 17    | 6     | 5     | 12    | 7     | 14    | 12    | 17    | 22    | 29    | 27    | 28    | 14    | 18    | 261         |
| Automotive Body Repair Technology   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 150         |
| Automotive Technology              | 8     | 9     | 8     | 4     | 13    | 7     | 9     | 23    | 6     | 14    | 29    | 26    | 24    | 27    | 33    | 20    | 260         |
| Career Pilot                       | 2     | 2     | 2     | 1     | 2     | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | 12          |
| Carpentry                          |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 169         |
| Child Development                  | 23    | 25    | 29    | 38    | 31    | 69    | 32    | 39    | 38    | 42    | 27    | 23    | 21    | 26    | 26    | 27    | 544         |
| Computer Information Systems       | 5     | 13    | 7     | 17    | 17    | 28    | 10    | 20    | 17    | 17    | 15    | 14    | 16    | 10    | 8     | 7     | 223         |
| Cosmetology                        | 2     | 5     | 5     | 5     | 13    | 18    | 14    | 27    | 16    | 20    | 11    | 14    | 13    | 21    | 17    | 7     | 208         |
| Criminal Justice                   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 86          |
| Diesel                             |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 159         |
| Law Enforcement                    | 10    | 8     | 7     | 11    | 7     | 4     | 4     | 5     | 14    | 6     | 12    | 83    | 80    | 56    | 376   |       |             |
| Public Administration              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 35          |
| Management                         | 16    | 20    | 34    | 40    | 59    | 72    | 63    | 68    | 51    | 17    | 12    | 14    | 10    | 36    | 23    | 29    | 564         |
| Radiologic Technology              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 57          |
| Pre-Nursing (RN)                   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 153         |
| Teacher Assistant/Aide             |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | -            |
| Practical Nurse                    | 38    | 45    | 48    | 54    | 58    | 52    | 52    | 54    | 48    | 78    | 60    | 67    | 57    | 67    | 70    | 59    | 907         |
| Welding                            |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 242         |
| Wild Life Management               | 6     | 6     | 5     | 3     | 3     | 4     | 3     | 4     | 10    | 15    | 7     | 16    | 21    | 27    | 15    | 30    | 175         |
| Total                              | 321   | 356   | 356   | 398   | 472   | 589   | 560   | 729   | 615   | 612   | 648   | 636   | 774   | 810   | 857   | 829   | 9562        |
| % General Education                | 57%   | 51%   | 47%   | 51%   | 43%   | 47%   | 53%   | 52%   | 50%   | 53%   | 50%   | 48%   | 45%   | 45%   | 49%   | 54%   |             |

Data Source: THECB Query Prep System
Table 6.4 shows that over the past 16 years, approximately half of all degrees awarded by SWTJC were general education degrees. In the 1998-99 academic year, SWTJC awarded a total of 321 degrees and certificates with 183 in general education of 57%. In 2002-03 and 2003-04, the total percentage of general education degrees fell to 43% and 47% respectively. This led to an adjustment in the ratio of general education degrees versus technical degrees, which was a desired outcome for the College. During that time frame, two programs were experiencing large increases in completers. The Child Development program rose from 38 graduates in 2001-02 to 59 and 69 in the next two consecutive years. The Management program was also experiencing huge expanses from 40 completers in 2001-02 to as many as 72 at its peak in 2003-04, an 80% increase.

The significance to highlight is that Thomas reported that Elementary Education experienced an impressive increase to 50 graduates up from only having one graduate in 1998-99. Table 6.4 subtly masks the fact that as of 2008-09 there have been no graduates from the Elementary Education program reversing the gain experienced in 2003-04. Two other programs that appear to have similar trends are the Management program and Child Development program. The Management program has dwindled from 72 graduates in 2003-04 to only 29 in 2013-14, representing a 60% decline in completers. Child Development program has effectively lost 60% of its graduates since 2003-04. While degrees and certificates awarded continue to increase in number, there is a clear trend of moving back to the College’s mindset prior to participating in the RCCI, settling again into the role of a transfer college. For example, in 1998 the College awarded General Education degrees to 57% of its graduates, with 54% in 2014.
Staffing for Enrollment Growth (Faculty)

In 1992, the SWTJC Agency Strategic Plan (1992-1998) set a goal to increase the minority faculty representation from 25% to 35%. Table 6.5 provides a breakdown of seven time frames in the 20 years from 1994 to 2014 of the race/ethnicity of all full-time faculty members. In 2003-04, the College reported to employee 43 Hispanic full-time faculty as well as two faculty members that report as “other,” providing a ratio of 60% white and 40% minority. By 2014-15, the ratio of white professors to minority has reached an equilibrium, with a small tilt to the minority faculty. SWTJC does not currently have any African-American professors. The racial makeup consists of 53 whites, 51 Hispanic, and 3 “others”, providing a 53 to 54 split or 49.5 to 50.5% between whites and minorities. Although the percentage of white full-time faculty dropped from 80% in 1993 to 53% in 2014, the actual number of white full-time faculty members has risen from 48 in 1993 to a peak of 67 in 2008, dropping back to 53 by 2014. During the twenty-year period from 1993 (pre-RCCI) until 2014, more than a decade after the RCCI program ended, the total number of white faculty members grew by 10%. However, during that same period, full-time Hispanic faculty member numbers increased from 12 to 51, a 325% increase. The College clearly reached its strategic goal set back in 1992 to have 35% Hispanic full-time faculty. At 80% Hispanic and 20% White, the ratio of full-time faculty does not quite mirror the population of the region but progress is evident. The goal of balancing race/ethnicity within the faculty ranks was not found in the 2011 to 2015 SWTJC Strategic Plan, possibly indicating that this is no longer a critical concern for the College.
Table 6.5

Race/Ethnicity of Full-Time Faculty at SWTJC, 1993-2014

<table>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>107</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: SWTJC Institutional Research Department

Table 6.6, *Fall 2010 Full-time and Adjunct Faculty by Gender and Ethnicity*, provides a snapshot of full-time and adjunct faculty based on ethnicity and gender. In 2004, 55% of the full-time faculty were males and 51% of them were members of a minority group (Thomas, 2005). Five years later, in 2010, not much had changed, with 54% of full-time faculty being male (and 55% of those belonging to a minority group), demonstrating a 4% increase in full-time minority male faculty members. In 2004, females comprised 45% of the full-time faculty, with 30% of them belonging to a minority group. In 2010, 46% of full-time faculty were female and of those 36% belonged to a minority group. Full-time minority females teaching in a full-time capacity has increased by 6% since 2004. Twenty years after the RCCI program began at SWTJC (2014) there is nearly equilibrium achieved among full-time male (51%) and female (49%) professors serving at SWTJC. Again, the College appears to have done well to strike a balance of race/ethnicity in its full-time faculty ranks.

Given the trend of adjunct hires at community colleges nationally, additional analysis is required. In 2004, there were a total of 102 adjunct faculty members, of whom 60 were Hispanics, three reported as “other,” and 39 were white, for a 62% majority-minority. The gender of those minority adjunct professors were 33% female and 28% male. Fast forward a
decade and by 2014, the total number of adjunct faculty has risen to 120, an 18% increase.

Additionally, 73% of the adjunct faculty are minority, which more closely mirrors the Middle Rio Grande region’s demographics. Of those minority adjunct professors, 39% are female demonstrating a significant increase to the number of minority male professors.

Table 6.6

Race/Ethnicity of Full-Time and Adjunct Faculty at SWTJC, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Full-time Faculty</th>
<th>Adjunct Faculty</th>
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Data Source: SWTJC Institutional Research

SWTJC Faculty Voices

Every organization is built to deliver a set of products wanted by its consumers. Having the right set of ingredients is critical to delivering a quality product. In the College arena, students are the consumers of education and the faculty are one of the most critical ingredients for a successful exchange. The faculty that have been interviewed over that past 20 years from
Southwest Texas Junior College share certain things in common. Most of them grew up in the area and attended SWTJC before getting the University degree, with many of those earned at SWTJC’s sister Sul Ross University. If they did not grow up in the region, they eventually met their significant other from the region and moved to southwest Texas. The researcher was only able to interview one individual still employed at the College who was also part of the previous research completed by Dr. Christopher Thomas in 2005. The other faculty members interviewed did not have direct knowledge of SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI. Their lack of knowledge provides an opportunity to determine how much of RCCI methodologies became institutionalized.

Paul Kimble is a proud member of the faculty ranks at SWTJC. He is a math professor at the SWTJC’s campus in Eagle Pass. Kimble earned his Bachelor of Science in Mathematics Education from Baylor University and a Master’s of Science in Mathematics from Texas State University. Professor Kimble has served the College since 1999 in the Math Department, and has provided leadership since 2007 as the Department Chair. Prior to arriving at SWTJC, Kimble taught for nearly a decade as a secondary math teacher for Wimberley High School (Hays County) and for Uvalde High School. Professor Kimble remains professionally active in his academic discipline by serving on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Developmental Education Math Reform Committee. He is also a member of the Texas Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges. In 2004, Kimble received SWTJC’s Faculty Association Teaching Excellence Award, and in 2008 SWTJC’s Outstanding Faculty Member Award.

Professor Kimble echoed Vice President Bermea’s historical assessment of Eagle Pass’ tremendous growth, stating “Our College itself has grown immensely since the time I joined the
college in 1999… really we are three times the size that we were then (Kimble, 2016).” Although enrollment has not tripled at Eagle Pass, it has increased from 1,314 in 1999 to 1950 in 2015 and increase of nearly 50%. The growth experienced at Eagle Pass is also related to the expansion of the physical plant and the growing number of programs being offered. In 1994, prior to SWTJC participating with the RCCI, Eagle Pass only offered “partial” programs for Administrative Information Technology, Child Development, and Criminal Justice – Law Enforcement. By 2014, Eagle Pass offered access to nine complete programs. Early Childhood – Grade 6, 4-8 EC-12 Special Education, 8-12 EC-12 Other than Special Education, Child Development, Computer Information Systems, Management, International Management, Management – Public Administration Specialty, and Nursing.

This translated to a student attending college in Eagle Pass having the capability to receive their degree or certificate in nine programs without the need to travel to Uvalde where SWTJC’s main campus is located. Kimble stated that the dynamics are different for a College when it must cover such a broad region. However, he stated that the College has been responsive to the region’s needs including the recent building constructed in Eagle Pass,

“… In fact they’ve given us a resource to build a brand-new facility that large expansion we just had here, primarily, for the stem path, the stem growth, the physics labs, and the need for students to gain better access here. And that’s because we get so many students that are, you know, well they’re Mexican-nationals, who are coming here wanting to study engineering here, and that’s kind of focused and centralized over here by them (Kimble, 2016).”

Professor Kimble defines the region as growing is economically, and he believes there is still plenty of work to do to address the great numbers of people that are not reaping the benefits
of local economic development, “We still see a great number of people around us who… have need of assistance (Kimble, 2016).” Kimble noted that the College attempts to push the envelope and gets extremely creative in providing the types of education the local population would benefit them, if enrolled at SWTJC. Kimble believes that getting the word out to the population of the 11-counties serviced by SWTJC is the only way the College will be able to continue improving the economics of southwest Texas’ people.

SWTJC’s educational impact is not simply economics and how much of an increase in the earning potential one might receive, but also a community service that can enrich the health and quality of life for its population. Remaining an active member of region, SWTJC sponsors or provides leadership and resources to conduct special events with the community. Professor Kimble serves as a faculty advisor for the honor students attending Eagle Pass. When Kimble was asked about the SWTJC impact on regional culture, he did not hesitate to reflect on a recent event whereby SWTJC students initiated a community education plan specific to Juvenile Type 2 diabetes. By helping individuals struggling in very low socioeconomic conditions to eat healthy, yet again it provides another example as to how the community college can become a catalyst for change in their region. Some of the struggle is in providing the education of what they should eat, and the other barrier is the cost of eating healthy. Kimble states it this way,

“Now it’s true that, you look at the diet that’s consumed here locally, and clearly you know the health needs, as well as the physical needs. We were able to share, with hundreds of young people, the effects, and the choices, that type 2 diabetes brings about. I would say ultimately we’re trying to actively participate in the regions culture. There are no questions—we’re talking about, literally influencing a whole style of behavior.”
The College is benefiting the students that attend SWTJC and the residents of the more than 16,000 miles of Texas serviced by the College. (Kimble, 2016)

Professor Kimble was asked if he believed that community colleges enable the people they serve to lead a better and enriching life. His response was simply, “I say undoubtedly, yes!” For example, Eagle Pass has created a Hall of Fame that showcases students that have attended SWTJC at Eagle Pass and have now moved on to future success. The student being showcased is provided a small bio and a picture that is posted to the closed-circuit television system at Eagle Pass. Professor Kimble understood the importance to show current students that success and advancement are possible through education at SWTJC’s campus at Eagle Pass. This reflects the fact that they become leaders at the senior colleges they transfer to. Examples of “Hall of Fame” are those students are receiving degrees in electrical engineering technology, an Aerospace Engineering degree completer at the University of Texas at Austin, another focused on mechanical engineering at U.T. Austin. Moreover, former students from Eagle Pass are serving as officers in the Engineering Honor Society at senior institutions. “We have students who are, at this point, in various places and positions across the region, state, nation, and the globe (Kimble, 2016).” Vice President Bermea noted that the City of Eagle Pass has graduates of SWTJC serving as the Mayor, County Judge, and ISD Superintendent. Professor Kimble, like most other faculty members that were interviewed, appears to have a healthy respect and level of trust with the College’s uppermost leadership, and appears to share the same vision of commitment to access and social uplift.

Mario Cardenas serves SWJTC as a History professor in the Social Sciences department. He has an earned Master of Arts degree in History and Politics from Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Cardenas received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the same University in History.
Prior to 2000, when Cardenas began working at SWTJC in the fall semester, he worked at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. His professional affiliations include being a member of Texas Faculty Association and Texas Community College Teachers Association. According to Cardenas, the Eagle Pass area has a strong connection to Mexico due to the city’s proximity to the Texas-Mexico border, providing a merging of Mexican and American cultures. Growth in enrollment at Eagle Pass might be attributed to the attainment of an American degree because it has a powerful allure that promises a better life if achieved. Cardenas agrees in the spirit of reaching for a slice of America’s apple pie, but has witnessed that not everyone assimilates quickly enough, stating that some never make the transition. Those that do not make the adjustment, but are a part of the old established families in the area, tend to meet with economic limitation. However, those that break through and earn a degree or certificate can live a better life. Cardenas remarked that it was not only the individual that received benefit, ‘…and not just them but you got the ripple effect, because they then turn and help their families whether its immediate or extended family (Cardenas, 2016).”

When asked about the impact of education of SWTJC on the Eagle Pass region, not the whole town specifically, but rather how does it affect the residents, and the people? Cardenas response was, “Oh – for those who take advantage, those who take advantage, the game is great…. And it’s just a matter of wanting to take advantage of it, because the opportunity’s there…. Unfortunately, a lot of them do take advantage, tend to leave you get the typical brain drain that small rural towns have to cope with. (Cardenas, 2016)”

Connie Buchanan serves SWJTC as the Division Chair for Business, Industrial and Technical Studies and in her spare time she is an Accounting Professor. She holds a Master’s of Business Administration degree from Sul Ross State University where she graduated magna cum
Buchannan is other one of those special employees currently working for SWTJC that are SWTJC alumni. Buchanan did not start her employment at SWTJC on the academic side of the institution but rather as an Accounts Payable clerk in 1996. Her professional affiliations include the Texas Community College Teachers Association, Teachers of Accounting at Two Year Colleges, and the SWTJC Faculty Association.

Many of the programs that Buchanan is responsible for are outside of the purview of the three larger campuses of Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass. Her area handles numerous dual credit classes where the programs are delivered at the smaller school districts like Leakey, Pataula, La Pryor, and Sabinal. Buchanan provides curriculum for many programs for the 11-county state-assigned service area for SWTJC, “…ranges from aviation to wildlife (Buchanan, 2016).” Buchanan executes research on possible new areas or programs that would benefit the region. Although Buchannan was hired after SWTJC’s initial RCCI participation had begun, and is somewhat removed from those activities, she utilizes the framework of MDC’s Moving from Vision to Action planning process whereby data collection and analysis begin to reveal a community’s needs,

“I believe it’s the most effect we would have (in the community), to improve the lives and the money-making ability of our community and our service area. We do research on possible new areas determine if the need is there, and if we find a need, we try to satisfy that need.” (Buchanan, 2016)

Advisory committees are created for each program offered at SWTJC. It is the faculty that are charged with scouring the community at large to recruit potential committee members from the community. The businesses that are current and potential future employers are targeted to serve on advisory committees for the College. If they will not serve, they are still considered a
very important resource and are utilized more informally. This activity also creates a feedback
loop that allows for feedback, both good and bad, regarding the type of employee that SWTJC is
producing.

Buchannan reflected about the evolution of the College and the type of students that attend. She points out that technology continues to play a critical role in the College’s ability to reach those students closer to their individual communities. Possibly running counter intuitive to the strict district lines that create the 50 community college districts in Texas, and with the availability of the internet and course content moving from paper books to video streaming, the district lines become more permeable as do the State and Country lines. Technology has the potential to provide access to educational opportunities not realized even a decade ago. Southwest Texas Junior College is a small rural college that presently delivers course content to a student currently on the other side of the globe across the Atlantic Ocean nearly 5,500 miles away:

“…we’re ever evolving, now it’s more video conferencing, and online students no longer come to our door, so we have had to evolve and become accessible to them, because they’re going to get their education somewhere and we want to get them here at SWTJC. We’re trying very hard on working in that area (online-video) … So, we no longer are defined by the eleven counties. In my accounting class I have someone in Germany right now taking the class. So, the geographical area has changed from Uvalde to global now, in my opinion. And so, the college is learning with growing pains and we are successfully going in the right direction, I believe.” (Buchanan, 2016)

Buchanan, like others interviewed, is appreciative of the current administration’s efforts to maintain the physical plant, and said its in best shape it has been in for years. She commented
that the College used to be considered a “cowboy” College and was run by a well-respect rancher. The College has transformed into a regional college with a regionally-minded President who prefers to be proactive by attempting to maintain their resources in order to avoid having them break in the first place. In her time at the College, she has witnessed a move from duct tape and wiring to fix problems to a methodology that is purposeful and planned. Buchannan shared that SWTJC interacts with each of the local communities in several ways including, but not limited to, hosting and/or participating in local cultural events. Because the area is a vast expanse of land, each of the campuses activities are based only in that location and not regionally. The relationship built between SWTJC and the community is highlighted by different types of cultural events attended by the College, which solidifies their role as “trusted advisor.” Events like the Day of the Dead (Día de Muertos), a Mexican holiday, will occur at all three main campuses for students,

“We have the creative arts contests, that’s going on at this time… to help build interest in the arts, it seems to be dying and get the kids interested. So, the college itself is involved in those areas as much as possible. We have a team of gentlemen that help our community do a lot of… we have the Briscoe cook-off in December…. Wade Carpenter, and Ismael Martinez, they work with the CIO. They help organize the Cactus Jack Festival and the College rodeo we have annually, that’s a big cultural area for us here at the College remembering that we have ranching back ground (Buchanan, 2016).”

Amanda Hadley serves the College as the Director of Vocational Nursing. Hadley is both a nurse and a counselor holding a Master of Science degree in Nursing from the Incarnate Word at San Antonio and a Master of Education in Guidance and Counseling from Sul Ross State University in Uvalde. She also earned her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing, and like so
many other faculty members and administrators, holds her Associate of Arts Degree from
Southwest Texas Junior College. Hadley has been recognized by the SWTJC Leadership Honor
Society, Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society of Nursing, as well as receiving awards of Faculty
Association Teaching Excellence and Outstanding Faculty Member. Unlike many other members
of SWTJC’s faculty ranks, Hadley is not from the area, it is her husband that drew her there.

Hadley’s interview began somewhat uncomfortable and tense. The interviewer began by
providing a quick overview of the study and the reference to the Rural Community College
Initiative, which drew a blank expression from Hadley. The researcher attempted to spark a
memory by explaining some of the activities encouraged by the Ford Foundation and the
timeframe when the College participated (1995-2002). After several minutes of jogging her
memory she asked, “was that the thing that started our distance learning?” Hadley’s memories
began to flood back as she remembered a few other critical events that were occurring at the
same time. As she began to recall, she was already busy at that time attempting to give birth to
the Nursing program at SWTJC and that was when she was approached to participate in a
providing her nursing programs at a distance via a new Distance Learning network. She was
fairly confident that her program was one of the very first departments that was strongly
encouraged to use the new technology. Hadley recalls that it was the interim Dean of Instruction
Hector Gonzales that approached her with the opportunity. Hadley recalls, Gonzales saying, “…I
want you to start teaching Nursing using DL and the College has just purchased all of the
equipment to connect three College locations and twenty-one school districts.” Hadley was
apprehensive about starting a new Nursing program and expressed concern about delivering the
course at a distance. Hadley noted to Gonzales her reservations about taking on a new “Nursing
Program” and a new “Distance Learning” system. Gonzales encouraged her to take the lead and she agreed.

Convincing the others in her department to utilize the new distance learning network and make use of video to deliver course content would require some additional work. Adding to her apprehension, she was new to the director role after her predecessor had left the College. She called a meeting where she had all three locations that delivered the Nursing program in a traditional modality to discuss the new opportunity afforded to them by their current Dean of Instruction (unknowingly, their future President). She indicated claimed the video conferencing equipment was bought for the Nursing program and they needed to start using it. Hadley remembers that none of the instructors from Uvalde, Del Rio, or Eagle Pass wanted to participate in using the new mode of teaching at a distance. “So I agreed to do it, so I was the first person that initiated and I was going to teach Pediatrics, so I was the Guinea pig. (Hadley, 2016).” There was another instructor that decided to teach nutrition and that was it in the very beginning. Now every class that nursing teaches is done via video conferencing. SWTJC has created a successful model for delivering courses at a distance that in 2014:

“SWTJC was visited by the Texas Board of Nursing to complete our survey, and they loved it, but the students complained because we were having some problems with our DL equipment. So, the only recommendation the Board of Nursing made was that we get new equipment. So, that summer when we came back to teach in the fall, we had all brand new equipment (Hadley, 2016).”

Many of the RCCI activities have been institutionalized and no longer carry the title of RCCI. For example, SWTJC is a “Leader College” participating in the Achieving the Dream (ATD) program. In much the same way that the RCCI focused on the use of data to help drive
institutional decisions, ATD operates in the same manner of using evidence to improve institutional impact. Dr. Mitchel Burchfield is one of the only remaining individuals still working at SWTJC that participated directly with the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative. He remembers RCCI like it was yesterday, and is the only individual interviewed that was personally involved with the Ford Foundation and MDC. That is not to assume that the others that were employed at that College during the time of SWTJC’s participation with RCCI played no role. Burchfield holds the distinction of authoring many of the original grant proposals to the Ford Foundation. The researcher’s time interviewing Dr. Burchfield yielded very little information of his accomplishments, due to the enthusiasm he struggled to contain, giving his entire time to recalling the impact on SWTJC and the community before, during, and after participating in the RCCI, “… it’s still vivid in my memory of what happened at that time and it’s been a really important event, in the history of the college having the opportunity to be part of the RCCI (Burchfield, 2016).” Dr. Burchfield is very proud of the work accomplished by the College and claims some personal victories because of his time interacting with the RCCI.

One of those victories is alive today and continues to provide access to higher education as well as economic development. During SWTJC’s participation with the RCCI, they successfully installed a fully interactive video distance learning system that connected the three campuses of Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass. This was a good opportunity for private business and community organizations because they could use the facilities for their own purposes, at least for the first several months. Additionally, a total of 21 school districts had joined SWTJC as partners to form a learning at a distance environment that would benefit the region’s educational goals. Burchfield noted that the RCCI contributed $40,000 and an additional $1.6 million was provided by Title III governmental funds. The new video network provided access to the internet
and two-way video for course content delivery for dual credit enrollment. As of August 2016, the following connections are still active with SWTNET to the school districts; Leakey has a T1 line to SWTJC for video conferencing, Brackettville has a T1 line to for video conferencing. Region 20 has an Ethernet connection to SWTJC for video conferencing. Texas is divided into regions known as educational service centers. Region 20 covers the San Antonio area. Hondo has a Giga-Man connection and Hondo uses this connection for all their internet connectivity, all the others connect to SWTJC through cloud technologies.

Dr. Burchfield’s journey to become faculty at SWTJC is not much different from many others. He grew up in the southwest Texas area before leaving to attend college. Prior to SWTJC, Burchfield taught for a short time in the public-school system and owned several small businesses. However, early in his teaching career at SWTJC, Burchfield was “volunteered” to work closely with the Ford Foundation. He recounted that he was an English and Math professor when he was approached to assist SWTJC with their strategic plan. While standing in President Word’s office, he recounts the serendipity of being in the President’s office when the call from the Ford Foundation arrived. The message presented from the Ford Foundation was to invite SWTJC, “to be a part of a new initiative starting for new rural community colleges to be a catalyst, for economic development.” The Ford Foundation commented that they had heard good things about SWTJC and they wanted to meet with a few members of the leadership team and if everything goes well, SWTJC will be a part of the RCCI. Shortly after that phone call SWTJC sent three individuals to New York City to the Ford Foundation headquarters. The three that made the trip were, the then President Billy Word, Mr. Rudy Flores (board president), and (pre-doctorate) Mr. Mitchell Burchfield. After demonstrating to the Ford Foundation everything the College was attempting to accomplish they were selected to participate in the RCCI. Burchfield’s
first activity in his new role for the College was to write the initial planning grant. He quickly became the administrator for future Ford Foundation Grants, providing him 10-years of future interaction with the Ford Foundation and the RCCI.

One of the more revealing effects of RCCI’s notion of planting seeds for change, was that it was not simply for the poorest people in the community but for the College leaders as well. Dr. Burchfield provides a testimony to the fact that the RCCI encouraged the core team to continue forward in their own academic journeys. The now “Dr.” Burchfield took that encouragement and completed his educational doctorate in 1998 majoring in development education, “…Yeah, Don Thomas also got his Doctorate at Grambling and another lady not directly connect to the RCCI decided to pursue her Doctorate, Carmen Meizi (Burchfield, 2016).”

The faculty at SWTJC are to be commended for their effort and their caring hearts. Each member of faculty that was interviewed carried a deep concern about the region. Interestingly, each location has an individual identity, but thinks regionally. This is evidenced by local events that are either hosted by the College or well attended by College personnel. One of the goals from the RCCI was to have SWTJC employees involved in the community they serve. Everyone that was interviewed described themselves has being professionally active in organizations as well as active in local civic organizations as well. Everyone from the President to the faculty are focused on how they can assist in improving the lives of the citizens in their region.
CHAPTER 7:
FINANCING GROWTH

Introduction

The conceptual frame work introduced by the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) and published by MDC in 1998 stated that the 5th and 6th key roles for community colleges were to develop programs that target poor people while creating jobs and encouraging a strong education ethic. Southwest Texas Junior College began to fulfill the role of trusted advisors for their region as well as becoming the vehicle to deliver access to higher education. This chapter will discuss the methods by which SWTJC has financed its growth. This growth has occurred against the backdrop of Texas’ funding model, which has seen deep cuts in recent years. As discussed in previous chapters, the researcher will provide snapshots of significant periods of time that will provide a view of SWTJC prior to participating in the RCCI, then shortly after participating 1995, and then 10 years after the RCCI program ended.

Grants were an important aspect of the SWTJC’s involvement in the RCCI. The ability to increase the capacity of SWTJC was the target of direct funding to hire positions of institutional researcher and grant-writer. Those hires lead to the need to bring on a public information officer and a director for workforce training and development. This chapter will analyze grant applications between 1995 and 2014 to determine how, if any, the College has altered how it finances operations to foster growth. This is followed by a brief discussion about the formation of the SWTJC Foundation, a key resource to circumnavigate the chasm created by Texas law related to building College facilities outside of taxing districts. In the case of SWTJC, that is the three “taxing” counties of Uvalde, Real, Zavala that comprised the original SWTJC district in
1947, prior to the 8 counties added by the State of Texas to SWTJC’s service delivery area in 1996. The chapter will conclude with information about SWTJC’s branch campuses’ growth.

The Texas Funding Model’s Impact on SWTJC Operations

The Texas funding model for community colleges challenges growing rural community college that serves poor regions, particularly with its concept of “in-district” and “out-of-district.” Chapter 6 introduced the concept of full formula funding and introduced an analysis of community college funding in Texas, showed via Hudson’s 2008 study how funding falls short. Hudson’s fifth conclusion was that “sufficient-to-supplement” is not an adequate or meaningful policy (2008). Additionally, state appropriations for community colleges are provided every other year or what is considered the biennium.

The biennium occurs in even years for Texas community colleges, whereby the State combines the enrollments of summer, fall, and spring semesters to determine the amount of appropriations a community college will receive over the subsequent two years. Not only has the State never provided “full” formula funding, but the reality of benchmarking every other year translates into the creation of undue burden for community colleges attempting to remain relevant by providing new programs that may be needed in their communities. For example, if a college had a regional need to provide welders and the college did not already have a well-established program, the actual cost of equipment required to purchase and the faculty needed to deliver the program can easily become unrealistic without State support. Community colleges like SWTJC that are located in rural south Texas have the potential to retreat back to their roots during a time when they simply provided the core classes like English, History, and Biology, to name a few, that would transfer to a four-year State University. The biennial funding cycle for those Colleges that are in large rural or urban areas may have the tax base to support the creation
of create new programs outside of funding years. Creating new programs outside of funding years translates to the financial burden is placed on the College until the biennial funding cycle catches up with appropriations provided from the State. Regrettably, for small rural communities there are not enough economies of scale to encourage them to create new programs that are out of sync with the State funding cycles, thus delaying their ability to provide what is needed in the communities that they must serve.

One of the primary goals related to participating in the RCCI was to become a catalyst in the region for economic growth, which in turn creates jobs that lead to an opportunity to enrich their lives. The funding model currently in use by Texas appears to benefit the citizens that are either born in or around an urban center or large rural area. The other side of the coin is that those citizens that live in a more rural or poor area in Texas do not have the same opportunities to reach for a piece of the American Dream. Figure 7.1, *Comparing Full Formula Funding to Actual Funded*, illustrates how Texas has contributed to community colleges over the past quarter century. The initial goal by the State for funding Texas community colleges was to provide 100% of instructional costs, to be determined by appropriations that reflected the number of contact hours actually delivered by each college. The 1990-91 biennium under the full formula funding model would have required $1,262,625,068, however, the actual amount of funding provided was $959,848,172, leaving short fall of $302,776,896 or funding 76% of full formula. The year that SWTJC began their involvement with RCCI, the 1994-95 biennium, funding from the State had dropped to 75.4% of the full formula for a shortfall state-wide of $370,071,958 of the $1,506,526,548 total required to fully fund community colleges in Texas. By 1998-99, state funding had dropped to 70.8% with a shortfall of 546,566,316 state-wide.
Shortly after 2005, the State had dropped to only funding about half of full formula funding. In 2004-05 full formula funding requiring $2,902,339,567 but received $1,501,275,041 or 51.7%.

In the case of SWTJC state appropriations in 2000 was $7,248,515 and by 2005 it had risen to $7,958,097. For the casual observer, this appears to represent that the State is providing additional monies to SWTJC. The reality, however, is different upon further analysis, remembering that the State provides appropriations base on credit contact hours delivered, the increase in actual State dollars from 2000 to 2005 was nearly 10%, but over the same period, SWTJC increased its contact hours from 1,575,424 to 2,095,240. Thus, contact hours generated jumped by approximately 33%, while state funds rose by 10%. Additionally, from 2000 to 2005 unduplicated head count rose from 5,190 to 6,811, an increase of 31%. There exists an obvious disconnect between the 10% increase in actual dollars provided to SWTJC versus the 33% increase in contact hours and 31% increase in individuals attending SWTJC. The State has in effect funded only one-third of the College’s growth between 2000 and 2005 based on its own formula model. This model creates an environment where growing community colleges like SWTJC can only offer limited classes and programs due to the delay and/or lack funding to build new programs like those in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.
* Funding models adjusts to include student success points.


Prior to the 83rd Session of the Texas Legislature years, funding for community colleges was confined to contact hours per credit course. The Legislature created two new strategies that included core operations and student success points. The student success points model is illustrated by Figure 7.2. Interestingly, the State introduced the two additional strategies of student success points and core operations but did not include new monies to support them. For example, total funding from the State is 90% (less core) in contact hour funding and 10% (less core) for student success points and then the “core” operations. The impact of Rider #23 in SB1 that required a new methodology for student success points stated:
“The Public Community/Junior Colleges of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall jointly develop recommendations for an allocation system for student success points for the 2016-2017 biennium. The allocation system should allocate funds to college districts for improvement in student achievement. The allocation system shall be developed in a manner that compares the performance of the college district to itself using the allocation for student success points in 2014-15 biennium as the baseline for comparison. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall report these recommendations to the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor no later than August 1, 2014.” (Texas Association of Community Colleges, 2013, p. 6)

The resulting actions of the 83rd Legislature in effect reduced by 10% the amount of monies being received for contact hours, but allowed the College to “earn” some or all the 10% back based on student success points. Creating a funding model focused on student success is a noble idea, but reducing the already reduced funding for those colleges that are already struggling does not provide them any type of life boat that they can share with their region.
This new calculation for funding is utilized in the last two biennia of 2014-15 and 2016-17 and denoted with an asterisk in Figure 7.1. Noting that only contact hours were used until 2012-13, it is somewhat difficult to compare those years denoted by an asterisk. Don Hudson provided informal insight from his 2015 working paper that the two most recent biennia show that a funding shortage in 2014-15 will be $3,091,320,748 (36.4%) of $4,861,180,818 required to fund the State’s community college districts. The following biennium of 2016-17 shows an increased shortage of $4,117,748,477 (29.8%) of the $5,863,395,628.
Analysis of the State funding provided to SWTJC compared to total contact hours and unduplicated head count during 2000, representing five years after the RCCI had begun, and 2012 represents a snapshot 10 years after the RCCI program ended it provides keen insight for lawmakers in Texas. Figure 7.1 shows that in 2000 State appropriations received 71% of full formula and by 2012 that funding level fell to 37% of full-formula to support Texas community colleges. However, during the same timeframe, SWTJC’s contact hours grew by 40% from 1,575,424 to 2,202,624 and unduplicated headcount grew by 45% from 5,227 to 7,555. The State has in effect reduced its support of community colleges in Texas by 34% during a time when colleges like Southwest Texas Junior College have increased contact hours and the number of students served by 40% to 45%. The impact on SWTJC is an appropriation from the State in 2000 of $7,248,515 to $8,613,312 in 2012, equating to a dollar to dollar increase of 20%, a rate that is half the rate of increases in contact hours and number of students served. As a final note about Figure 7.1, in the 2010-11 biennium, the total amount of money the State will not provide (shortfall) has surpassed the amount of money they will provide (actual funded) and that remains constant as of 2016. The States’ inability to adequately fund community colleges forces them to look for revenue from other sources like grants discussed later in this chapter.

Southwest Texas Junior College’s Finances 1995 to 2014

Over the past twenty years the support from the State of Texas for community colleges has remained in a condition of free falling. On the other hand, expenses for community colleges continues to rise. A close examination of SWTJC’s expenses from 1995 to 2014 paint a picture of increased and not vanishing need. Figure 7.3 Annual Program Expense by Function 1995 to 2014, plots Southwest Texas Junior College’s increases in expenses during a twenty-year period spanning from the year that SWTJC began its participation with the RCCI until 2014, 12 years
after the program had ended. The College’s expenses have increased significantly; total expenses grew from $14 million in 1995 to nearly $40 million with “summer” Pell in 2010, to just over $33 million by 2014. Thomas (2005) reported a 47% increase from 1995 to 2000 and stated a direct correlation of expenses to the increase in number of students served during that time-frame (Thomas, 2005). By 2003-04 the year following the official end to the RCCI program, the College’s expenses had grown to nearly $26 million representing an increase of another 26% since 2000. By 2010, the College’s expenses were at their highest on record, coinciding with the inclusion of “summer” Pell at $38,556,474 posting an increase of 48% since 2003. The past few years has the College’s expenses leveling out to around $33 million, a 14% decrease.

The bigger picture is that the expenses incurred by the College have increased by nearly 137% dollar to dollar. However, per the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ adjusting for inflation, the purchasing power of the dollar in 1995 equates to $1.57 in 2014. Thus, after adjusting for inflation, the approximately $14 million previously required to cover expenses would need $22 million for the same purchasing power in 2014. What appeared as an exponential increase in expense of 137% over a twenty-year period is approximately 50% after adjusting for inflation. Examining the period between 2000 and 2014, adjusting for inflation replicates the same type of trend whereby increased enrollment and increased contact hours does not translate into actual dollars from the State. For example, State appropriations, when adjusted for inflation, decreased by $1,235,936 or 12% at SWTJC from 2000 to 2014.

However, the very attributes that guide the determination of State appropriations moved in a positive direction, not negative. For instance, enrollment at SWTJC from 2000 to 2014 increased in unduplicated headcount by 3,235, providing an increase of 62%. During the same period, contact hours increased by 484,000 or 31%. Additionally, the annual expenses for
SWTJC from 2000 to 2014 increase by approximately $12 million or 38%. The increase in expenses (38%) for the College reflects directly with the increase in contact hours (31%) and is juxtaposed to the decrease in State funding (12%).

Figure 7.3

*Annual Program Expense by Function 1995 to 2014*

![SWTJC Expenses 1995 to 2014](image)

Data Source: Independent Auditor’s Reports of SWTJC’s Financial Statements

Figure 7.4, *Annual Expense by Function 2003-04, 2009-10, and 2013-14*, provides a closer examination of how expenses have adjusted over time based on the eight categories reported in the College’s annual financial report of, instruction, extension and public service, academic support, student services and admissions, institutional support, physical plant maintenance, student aid, and auxiliary enterprises during significant time periods in SWTJC’s
20-year journey. The first period is taken during the initial year of participation in the RCCI, 1995-96 followed by 2003-04. The third period is 2009-10, approximately eight years post RCCI, and the fourth time period is 2013-14, representing the most current data available at the time of this case study. The anemic amounts of funding provided by the State restricts where the College can deliver programs to students. Instructional costs have remained at approximately 30% of total expenses from 1995 to 2010. The expenses for the physical plant also remained steady, at approximately 10% of total expenses. Institutionally funded student aid at SWTJC in 1995 was non-existent at 0.25%, followed by a large increase to 25% in 2003, only to shrink back to 4% of total expenses in 2014. Auxiliary enterprises were strong in 1995 at 22% of total expenses and down as low as 8% in 2003 and at 13% of total expenses by 2014. The two areas with steady increases were academic and institutional support where both increased by 5% from 1995 to 2014 reflecting the same types of increases in student population. Based on the shifts in expenditures, the College appears to have turned its focus towards areas that attract and retain students. Adjustments in where SWTJC chose to spent their limited money, primarily due to shrinking funding from the State, arrived at the cost of providing less “extension and public service.” Final analysis of Figure 7.4 indicates that the category of extension and public service has taken the biggest hit, and that is particularly negative when the institution is considered to be a “community” college.
Community colleges in Texas depend on several revenues sources and for reporting purposes those are arranged into six categories. Those categories include State appropriations, Tuition and Fees, Ad-Valorem Taxes, Federal Grants, State Grants, and Other. Figure 7.5 (pie chart) and Figure 7.6 (line chart) both reflect revenue sources of SWTJC. Figure 7.5 “SWTJC Revenue by Source 1995 and 2014 (pie chart)”, illustrates revenue by source in 1995 and in 2014 representing a snapshot at the beginning of SWTJC participation and then 12 years after the RCCI program ended. Figure 7.6 “SWTJC Revenue by Source from 1995 to 2014 (line chart),” providing a 20-year historical view of the changes in revenue. In 1995, State monies represented 33% of the total revenue received by SWTJC. Fast forward 20 years, and by 2014 State monies provide 1/4th of the total revenue. Another major adjustment between 1995 and 2014 is found in
the category of “other.” Figure 7.5 shows that in 1995 “other” comprised a 15% of total revenue; by 2014 this equates to 42% of all revenue received by SWTJC. According to Anne Tarski, SWTJC Vice President of Finance, the category of “other” comprised items divided between operating revenue such as non-governmental grants, sales of educational activities, indirect cost recovery, transcript fees, building rental, sales proceeds, rebate revenue and non-operating revenue such as federal revenue (Pell Grant), gifts and investment income. The large adjustment in the category of “other” from 1995 to 2014 resulted from differences in reporting the 2008 annual financial statements and the 2009 annual financial statements, when SWTJC was required to move the revenue for Pell from the federal grants section to non-operating revenues. Thus, any dollars represented after 2009 in the federal grants section does not include the Pell Grant.
Figure 7.5

*SWTJC Revenue by Source in 1995 and 2014 (Pie Chart)*

**SWTJC Revenue by Source 1995**

**SWTJC Revenue by Source 2014**

Data Source: SWTJC IR Department and Independent Auditors Reports
Thorough examination of revenue sources expressed in Figure 7.6, SWTJC Revenue by Source from 1995 to 2014, shows how revenue sources changed from the time SWTJC began participating with the Rural Community College Initiative in 1995. Dissecting the 20 years into three time frames, with the first representing the initial 10 years (1995 to 2005) and then the last 10 years, followed by the 20 years of change from 1995 to 2014, we see the total revenues from 1995 to 2005 grew by $12,842,449 or 82.5% while at the same time federal grants decreased by 30%. The three areas that grew the most were state grants, up by 265%; ad-valorem taxes, up by 295%; followed by “other”, up by 423%. During the first 10-year period, student tuition and fees increased slightly (11%). The second period after program ended from 2005 to 2014 shows an additional $7,188,028 or 24% increase in total revenue generated by the College. State appropriations increased slightly at 19% from 2005 to 2014. During the same time student tuition
and fees increased by $2,533,382 or 84%. Ad-valorem taxes raised an additional $1,673,647 million, an increase of 116%, and federal grants decreased by $1,749,122 or 52% from 1995 to 2014.

However, the 20-year view provides what one might expect when State funding is drastically reduced over time. From 1995 until 2014, the largest increase in revenue falls into the category of ad-valorem taxes (property taxes) increasing by 752%, providing an additional $2,755,550. The second largest increase in revenue fell into the category of “other” demonstrating a 565% increase, but remember that some of that adjustment is the requirement to report Pell differently. The reporting requirement adjustment is also reflected in some of the reduction in Federal Grants whereby the College received 66% less than they did in 1995 and about 1/2 of that loss occurred prior to 2005.

Total revenue thus grew at SWTJC by approximately $20 million or 129% since 1995. The smallest increase in revenue from 1995 until 2014 by source was in State appropriations, which added $3,762,700 (73%), followed by tuition and fees collected from student at $2,839,248 (104%). Another way to understand the underwhelming support the State of Texas is providing the citizens of southwest Texas, is to measure the revenue source in terms of a “per student” ratio. For example, the unduplicated headcount at SWTJC was 4660 in 1995, equating to approximately $1,104 per student provided by state appropriations. Fast forward 20 years, and the 2014 enrollment is 8,425, with the per student dollars provided by state appropriations dropping by 4%, providing only $1,057. Again, comparing apples to apples and adjusting for inflation, the 1995 per student State appropriation received adjusts from $1,104 to $1,733 per student, then compare that to the 2014 of $1,057 per student ratio. This adjusts the calculation in such a way that the State actually has decreased per student support by 39% since 1995, equating
to a reduction of per student $676 annually based on the purchasing power of the 1995 dollar in
2014, adjusting for inflation. In 1995, state appropriations accounting for 33% of the total
revenues and by 2014 that had adjusted to 25%. These massive reductions in State support over
the 20-year period do not reflect the support required for an 81% increase in student enrollment
at SWTJC.

Lawmakers in Texas rely on the community college’s ability to levy a property tax.
Texas has 50 community college districts that compete for scarce resources from the State. Texas
provides funding for higher education with the surplus from the State’s budget. Imagine for a
moment the possibility might exist where there would be no funds after balancing the State’s
budget, it is possible! It is relevant to note that Texas does not have a state income tax and relies
primarily on consumption taxes in the form of sales tax to fund the Texas state budget. If there is
little consumer activity, then there exist little sources of revenue to fund the State’s budget.
When the State budgets are tight, community college funding seems like a logical choice when,
as a State lawmaker, they know that community colleges have the ability to raise money by
means of ad-valorem taxes and if shorted by the state then the community college district has the
ability to raise taxes in their District, provided the citizens vote to approve. Chapter 2 briefly
discussed the 225% increase in property taxes when SWTJC was forced to raise tax rates on
some of the poorest citizens in Texas and the U.S. (Figure 2.3).

In light of dwindling State support, SWTJC’s Board of Trustees had little alternative but
to raise taxes five times in 20 years. The largest of these increases occurred in 2002-03 with a
50% increase from $0.06 to $0.09 cents (per $1000 valuation) eventually being raised to $0.13 in
2009-10. As of 2016 it remains at this level. In the case of SWTJC, they are able to collect
property taxes in just three of their elven counties (Real, Uvalde, and Zavala). In 1995 ad-
valorem taxes provided approximately $79 per student annually, and by 2014 that amount had risen to $371 per student - representing a 372% increase. Again, adjusting the 1995 to 2014 dollars, the per student funding rises from $79 per student in 1995 to $123 per student. Further, the difference in the per student ratio of ad-valorem taxes collected increased by 200% instead of the 372% ($123 to $371).

Although there is little hope of taxing poor people out of poverty, it is obvious that the State decreased its per student dollars by nearly 40% from 1995 to 2014 while during the same timeframe SWTJC raised property taxes by 200% per student. In 1995, property taxes accounted for 2% of the total revenues and by 2014 that had adjusted to 9%. Figure 7.7, *Assessed Value and Taxable Assessed Value 1994-95 to 2013-14*, provides the assessed valuation minus any exemptions to derive the taxable assessed valuation of properties in the tri-county community college taxing district. Taxable assessed valuation for the tri-county area grew from $908,640,574 in 1994-95 to $2,397,214,761 by 2014. Examining the 20 years from 1994-95 to 2013-14, it shows a significant increase in property valuations increasing to $2,397,214,761 (164%) in 2013-14. The first 10 years from 1994-95 to 2003-04 experienced an increase in taxable assessed valuation of $303,157,471 (33%). The following 10 years from 2003-04 to 2013-14 the property values nearly doubled from $1,211,798,045 to $2,397,214,761 (98%). SWTJC’s ability to raise taxes is an option they are required to utilize to make up for the shortfall in State funding.
Student tuition and fees provides another important revenue source for public colleges. According to an article posted by the Business Insider, “the average cost of college tuition from 1980 to 2014 grew by nearly 260%, compared to the nearly 120% increase in all consumer items (Jackson, 2015).” Southwest Texas Junior College received $2,728,035 in tuition and fees in 1995, and by 2014, this had increased to $5,567,283. Again, for comparison purposes, the per student allocation in 1995 for tuition and fees was $585. A growth of $74 additional per student in 2014, resulting in $661 per student or a 13% increase. When adjusting the 1995 dollars into 2014 dollars that percentage changes to -28%. The adjusted per student in 1995 changed from $585 to $919, showing a decrease of $258 for each student. In 1995, tuition and fees accounted for 18% of the total revenues, and by 2014 that had adjusted to 16%. SWTJC has been able to weather the decreased financial support from the State without the predictive reaction of choosing to generate additional funds on the backs of students. In fact, adjusting the purchasing
power of the dollar from 1995 to 2014 proves that the College has actually asked less from the student in 2014 than they did in 1995. The evidence suggests that SWTJC did not increase tuition and fees in such a way to make up for the shortfall from the State, it is the taxpayers that are carrying a larger financial load. It is important to remember that only 3 of the 11 counties pay property taxes, placing an even larger burden on a small group of taxpayers to cover the declining State support. Grants have the potential to provide another source of revenue and may explain SWTJC’s ability to contain costs to students by apply for and receiving grants.

Grants

The constant rise in tuition across the U.S. requires an equal rise in revenue sources. Community colleges primarily rely on three sources of revenue: State dollars, local dollars, and student dollars. All three of these sources are volatile by nature because they depend on an individuals’ priorities and interests to align with the College’s financial needs. The college administrator is bound to ask, “Will the State keep funding levels the same in the next biennium?” The answer to this question based on the data in this case study indicate that the support from the State will be less and not more. Then the administrator only has the other two sources to drive revenue to the college. Raising local property taxes are well within the ability of the community college. However, increased property tax rates must be voted on by the local citizens and it is easy to predict that few people volunteer for more taxes. This leads the administrator to look towards increases in student tuition and fees to bridge the gap in funding from the State. However, the evidence is clear that SWTJC did not travel down this road to have the students carry more of the financial burden. Fortuitously, Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative planted the seed of grant writing to provide a new revenue source that many rural community colleges fail to actively pursue.
The RCCI’s goal for SWTJC to become a regional college requires the ability to increase the College’s capacity to deliver services and, of course, that requires money, people, and time. With vanishing State funding, and little ability assess ad valorem taxes on the impoverished area enough to cover the chasm left by the State, and armed with the reality that students cannot afford to pay higher tuition, applying for Grants is the only logical option for added revenue. Funding from the Ford Foundation provided the College the ability to hire the personnel to focus on applying and receiving grant money. According to Thomas (2005), SWTJC had only received a few grants per year prior to their participation in the RCCI (p. 132). Thomas was able to capture comments from former long-term President Ismael Sosa that grant writing had become part of SWTJC culture and will provide a means to preserve the momentum gained from participating in the RCCI.

Appendix H, *Chronology of Grants Received by SWTJC, 1994-2001*, provides a historical record of the grants received during the time of SWTJC participating in the RCCI (Thomas, 2005, p. 176). The College received 21 individual grants equaling nearly $8.5 million from federal, state, and private funds. Table 7.1, *Chronology of Submitted Grants by Southwest Texas Junior College 2001 to 2014*, provides a glimpse into the activity SWTJC places on grants. Table 7.1 does not include the 21 grants awarded that generated $8.5 million between 1994 and 2001 reported by Thomas (2005). The College submitted 73 applications for grants between 2001 and 2014. SWTJC was awarded 50 grants at a conversion rate of 68%, and totaling $24,697,493. The funding derived from grants provides relief for SWTJC in their general operational budget providing flexibility to take advantage of other priorities. There was one grant awarded in 2007 that did not include funding by the USDA. The USDA grant would fund a two-year project with Texas State University and Laredo Community College to provide scholarships to Hispanic
students majoring in agriculture and provide job shadowing, mentoring and career service support, however the grant would provide no local dollars for SWTJC. In 2007, the Texas Workforce Commission offered a skills development grant to train 28 Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) and 20 Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and the College decided to withdraw their application.
## Table 7.1

**Chronology of Submitted Grants by Southwest Texas Junior College 2001 to 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Funded</th>
<th>Not Funded</th>
<th>Pending</th>
<th>Date Submitted</th>
<th>Length of Grant in Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENLACE (CSTEP)</td>
<td>W.K. Kellogg/Houston Endowment – to increase number of Hispanics completing baccalaureate and other advanced professional degrees</td>
<td>$241,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Serving Institutions Assisting Communities (HSIAC)</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Housing &amp; Urban Development – to renovate Frank Clisian Technical Center and implement Certified Diesel Technology Program</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Support Program</td>
<td>Department of Defense – Mathematics/Science Enrichment Laboratories</td>
<td>$195,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASICST - Scholarships (CSEMS)</td>
<td>National Science Foundation-Scholarships for student in computer science, engineering or mathematics career pathways</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspen</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhancing Multicultural Education</td>
<td>National Endowment for the Humanities – to enhance and enrich the Humanities Multi-Cultural program</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Bound</td>
<td>Middle Rio Grande – Summer college orientation and preparation</td>
<td>$258,057</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving the Dream</td>
<td>Lumina Foundation</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving the Dream - Planning Grant</td>
<td>Lumina Foundation – round one investment to work with other colleges to build a professional learning community</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMP</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Education to provide outreach academies, supportive &amp; financial assistance to migrant farm workers to complete the first academic year of college and to continue in postsecondary education</td>
<td>$1,726,322</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>College Bound</td>
<td>Middle Rio Grande – Summer college orientation and preparation</td>
<td>$174,802</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GeoFORCE</td>
<td>National Science Foundation-Scholarships for student in biological sciences, physical sciences, geosciences, engineering or mathematics career pathways</td>
<td>$186,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEP</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Education to provide outreach academic, supportive &amp; financial assistance to migrant farm workers to successfully obtain a GED, gain employment or enter the military or continue their education in a postsecondary education institution</td>
<td>$1,747,560</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Bound</td>
<td>Middle Rio Grande – Summer college orientation and preparation</td>
<td>$190,414</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education – GED &amp; ESL programs</td>
<td>$967,719</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl D. Perkins - Special Populations</td>
<td>Provides technical/vocational students services needed to successfully complete their program of study</td>
<td>$484,608</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRGDC</td>
<td>College Bound - summer college orientation preparation program</td>
<td>$253,012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education – GED &amp; ESL programs</td>
<td>$972,321</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancing Geosciences in Southwest TX</td>
<td>National Science Foundation (NSF)</td>
<td>$498,413</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl D. Perkins - Special Populations</td>
<td>Provides technical/vocational students services needed to successfully complete their program of study</td>
<td>$426,690</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating a Math &amp; Science Community in Southwest Texas - CAMSC</td>
<td>Department of Education – increase Hispanic/Low-income students who major in &amp; receive STEM degrees &amp; develop transfer and articulation agreements in STEM fields w/ 4 yr. institutions</td>
<td>$1,762,316</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRGDC</td>
<td>College Bound - summer college orientation preparation program</td>
<td>$237,215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl D. Perkins - Special Populations</td>
<td>Provides technical/vocational students services needed to successfully complete their program of study</td>
<td>$421,55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl D. Perkins - Special Populations</td>
<td>Provides technical/vocational students services needed to successfully complete their program of study</td>
<td>$381,920</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl D. Perkins - Special Populations</td>
<td>Provides technical/vocational students services needed to successfully complete their program of study</td>
<td>$314,688</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Funded</td>
<td>Not Funded</td>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td>Length of Grant in Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumina</td>
<td>To increase Latino Student Success in graduation at SWTJC and increase transfer rates to university</td>
<td>$600,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl D. Perkins - Special Populations</td>
<td>Provides technical/vocational students services needed to successfully complete their program of study</td>
<td>$302,408</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>ABE</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education - GED &amp; ESL programs</td>
<td>1,487,361</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Foundation</td>
<td>Three year summer math academy program to prepare students for university level math and science.</td>
<td>$714,680</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gear Up</td>
<td>Department of Education - increase number of students graduating high school, prepared to enter college and be successful</td>
<td>$4,729,370</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Science Foundation</td>
<td>Implement an Hydraulic Technology AS degree program</td>
<td>$881,528</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC - Nuclear Regulatory Commission</td>
<td>GeoFORCE Texas - Inspiring the Next Generation of Scientists</td>
<td>$271,080</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACE/MSET</td>
<td>NASA – program to strengthen 8th-11th grade students math skills</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACE/MSET</td>
<td>NASA – program to strengthen 8th-11th grade students math skills</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Entry Nursing Preparation Program</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Health &amp; Human Services-to enhance capabilities of junior/senior high school student through innovative early preparation and intervention strategies for successful entry &amp; completion of Nursing program</td>
<td>$765,900</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Skills Development Funds</td>
<td>Texas Workforce Commission</td>
<td>$142,365</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Southwest Texas Academy for TEA</td>
<td>National Science Foundation - provide OST academic support.</td>
<td>$800,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southwest Texas Rural STEM Initiative</td>
<td>National Science Foundation - Scholarship program for students in biological sciences, physical sciences, geosciences, engineering or mathematics at SWTJC and 2 years at a 4 year institution</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Texas Rural STEM Program</td>
<td>National Science Foundation - Scholarship program for students in biological sciences, physical sciences, geosciences, engineering or mathematics at SWTJC and 2 years at a 4 year institution</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<td>Southwest TX Rural Health Initiative</td>
<td>Department of Labor to Implement RN and Rad Tech programs</td>
<td>$1,929,645</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWTETP</td>
<td>National Science Foundation – increase teacher preparation in STEM program areas</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>TEA</td>
<td>Early College High School Small and Rural District Planning Grant</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tech Prep</td>
<td>Partnership between SWTJC &amp; area high schools in which students can earn college credits towards an AAS in 7 program areas</td>
<td>$228,171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tech Prep</td>
<td>Partnership between SWTJC &amp; area high schools in which students can earn college credits towards an AAS in 7 program areas</td>
<td>$229,380</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Workforce Commission</td>
<td>Skills Development Grant to train 28 LVNs and 20 CNAs. (withdrew application)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Workforce Commission</td>
<td>SWTJC Year-Round College Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>$74,621</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>6 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Workforce Commission</td>
<td>SWTJC Year-Round College Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>$98,377</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG Public Benefit Program</td>
<td>Southwest Texas Summer Math Academy to identify individual students' weaknesses in math and address them so they are successful at university-level calculus.</td>
<td>$277,335</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>THECB</td>
<td>Motivational Performance Team Project – performance team to motivate secondary students to stay in school, graduate and go to college.</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>7 months</td>
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Table 7.1 (Continued)

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Funded</th>
<th>Not Funded</th>
<th>Pending</th>
<th>Date Submitted</th>
<th>Length of Grant in Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>TIF Academic Grant</td>
<td>Telecommunication Infrastructure Fund Board - Technology Advancement</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>TIF Academic Grant</td>
<td>Telecommunication Infrastructure Fund Board - Technology Advancement</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIF Library Grant</td>
<td>Telecommunication Infrastructure Fund Board - Technology Advancement</td>
<td>$84,637</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title V</td>
<td>Department of Education - Student Success Centers in Uvalde, Eagle Pass &amp; Del Rio</td>
<td>$2,757,904</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title V</td>
<td>Department of Education - HSI - STEM (program)</td>
<td>$5,057,501</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title V Cooperative</td>
<td>Department of Education - increase math &amp; science teacher education programs</td>
<td>$671,237</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title V HSI</td>
<td>Department of Education - Development/Improvement of developmental education programs &amp; improvement of student services/student life</td>
<td>$2,129,345</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIO – EOC</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$1,022,120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>TRIO – EOC</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$2,166,424</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIO – EOC</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$1,150,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIO – Talent Search</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$1,741,127</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIO – Upward Bound</td>
<td>Department of Education - increase number of students graduating high school, enroll in college and be successful</td>
<td>$1,248,893</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIO-Student Support Services</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$1,040,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIO-Student Support Services</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$1,167,432</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIO-Student Support Services</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$1,543,122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>USDA</td>
<td>Two year project with Texas Agricultural Experiment Station &amp; Texas A&amp;M to SWTJC undergraduate education in the application of geospatial technologies (global position systems, geographic information and remote sensing).</td>
<td>$127,700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA - (no money for SWTJC)</td>
<td>Two year project with Texas State University and Laredo Community College to provide scholarships to Hispanic students majoring in agriculture and provide job shadowing, mentoring and career service support. No local funds provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Round College Preparatory</td>
<td>Middle-Rio Grande Workforce Board - prepare 11th &amp; 12th grade students to enter college and be successful</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>6 mo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>YouthBuild</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$293,100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>Title V Cooperative Grant - Developing Hispanic - Serving Institutions Program</td>
<td>$3,521,014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIO – Upward Bound</td>
<td>Department of Education - increase number of graduating high school, enroll in college and be successful</td>
<td>$1,250,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerate Texas ABE-3G (Innovate)</td>
<td>THECB -- integration of ABE skills into college pathways</td>
<td>$279,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABE, TANF-Regular</td>
<td>Multiple sources: Federal, Federal Corrections, Federal Professional Development, State, TANF Federal and TANF State</td>
<td>$978,168</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>ABE</td>
<td>EL-Citiz</td>
<td>$112,727</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>SWITC Oil &amp; Gas Initiative</td>
<td>Texas Workforce Commissioner Skills Development Fund</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA</td>
<td>energy efficiency pilot program Develop a course, train energy auditors, and identify programs that would require energy audits</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$28,107,838</td>
<td>$23,664,916</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,591,014</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: SWTJC Institutional Research
SWTJC’s journey to become a regional community college began in 1994 when the College was locally known as Uvalde’s College. Thomas, noted SWTJC’s recognition as a Rural Enterprise Zone (the Futuro Proposal) and the College’s participation in the Lumina Grant Project provided evidence that the College had expanded its focus to a regional perspective (2005, p. 4). The Lumina Grant and the Aspen Grant are two important and unique grants that provide a glimpse at what the College has been able to accomplish via their initial RCCI participation. A major theme to the participation in the RCCI was to become regionally-minded and to become self-sufficient in seeking out both educational opportunities and funding opportunities. Carol Lincoln of MDC and ATD stated that SWTJC involvement with the RCCI prepared the College for their eventual participation in the Lumina Foundation’s Achieving the Dream initiative (Lincoln, 2014, personal interview). Lincoln was the Senior Program Director at MDC responsible for directing the Rural Community College Initiative from 1994 through 2003.

Lincoln is uniquely positioned to judge the relationship between SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI and the fact that it provided the impetus to get them into the Lumina Foundation’s Achieving the Dream (ATD) initiative because she currently serves as ATD’s Senior Vice President. In 2005, SWTJC received a $50,000 planning grant for ATD followed by an implementation grant of $400,000 over a 3-year period. The implementation grant of 2005 stated the following: Priority #1 Enhancing student success by increasing the college’s capacity to establish a “culture of evidence” with regard to decision making and accountability measures. Followed by Priority #2 Enhancing student success by improving students’ experience in and movement through developmental education and gatekeeper courses. And lastly Priority #3 Enhancing student success by adopting the philosophy and practices that define a “Learning Organization” (Southwest Texas Junior College, 2005).
SWTJC would attract the Lumina Foundation’s focus again in 2011 when they were awarded $600,000 to in an attempt to increase the Latino student success in graduation rates at SWTJC and to increase the transfer rates of Latinos out of SWTJC to universities. Southwest Texas Junior College has been active in Achieving the Dream since 2004 and holds the distinction of being one of it original 27 colleges. SWTJC has been recognized as a “Leader College” by ATD from 2009 to present (2016). President Gonzales is quoted on ATD’s website describing the valuable role played by ATD:

ATD is the perfect venue for Higher Education practitioners to share knowledge, celebrate successes, and work through challenges with each other. The support and resources we gain from the ATD network help us provide our students with innovative and proven strategies which direct them onto successful pathways. (Gonzales, 2016)

During the researchers visit to SWTJC on April 25, 2016 the College was being visited by their ATD coaches. Dr. Edward Morante is the Data Coach from ATD assigned to SWTJC and has been since the beginning the College’s participation with Achieving the Dream. Morante recalls that the first proposal from SWTJC written by Blain Bennett was to build a distance learning network to connect the 22 school districts. That project was not funded by ATD but would eventually be funded by a combination of RCCI funding and Title IV funding. Morante assisted Blain Bennett with a rewrite of the grant proposal and they did receive the grant from ATD that focused on student success. Dr. John Brockman serves as the Leadership Coach for ATD and is assigned to SWTJC. Brockman has worked with SWTJC for the past 5 years and provides coaching for the leadership team. One of the interesting comments Brockman made during dinner provides another profound thought about the dilemma a College like SWTJC encounters with the State,
Economic impact studies sometimes I think miss the point about community colleges, for example we would have to go to Austin to get approval to start a new technical program and one of the things you had to do is prove there is a demand in your area to start a new technical program and in impoverished areas like Southwest Texas there is no demand and thus the community college in those areas are less likely to be approved to offer a new program (Brockman, 2016).

Achieving the Dream has provided continuity in the data drive world that SWTJC began when participating in the RCCI. The ATD team makes a yearly visit to guide the College in the use of data to determine student success. One other important grant opportunity to discuss is from the Aspen Institute.

The Aspen College Excellence Program focuses on identifying and sharing practices that significantly improve outcomes for college students. In a news release from the Aspen Institute on September 13, 2011, Southwest Texas Junior College was selected as a top 10 finalist after competing against 120 others. The announcement proclaimed that SWTJC now enters the last stage of competition for the $1 million prize fund. SWTJC was honored for its focus on excellence as defined by learning, completion, equity, and labor market outcomes. Josh Wyner who is the Executive Director of the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program comment about SWTJC in this way,

Most people don’t look toward southwest Texas for examples of educational excellence, but that’s a mistake,” said Josh Wyner, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program. “Southwest Texas Junior College is building a culture of leadership and improvement. That is paying off.
The addition of a grant writer by means of RCCI planning and funding activities was one of the most significant activities that provided the College with the ability to fish on their own. However, as of this researcher’s visit in April of 2016, Don Blaine had retired from the College and there were no intentions to replace this position immediately. Don Blaine was the grant writer for many of SWTJC grants. When the question was asked about how the College would handle his absence, the response was that the dean’s and vice president’s would be responsible for seeking out grant opportunities. The researcher suggests due to the fact the College attracted $8.5 million in grants from 1994-2001 and another $24.7 million in grants from 2001-2014 totaling more than $33 million, the College should invest in a dedicated grant writer as soon as possible. This amount of money raised from grants will prove to be difficult to replace without a full-time grant writer.

SWTJC Foundation: Building Along the Texas Boarder

The College’s ability for the College to attract grant funding has been one of the ingredients to their ability to keep the doors open and to offer programs that expand past the “core” courses. One of the successful projects completed by the College was to determine a way to build physical facilities in populations centers within its “service area” for which it did not collect property taxes. Remember under Texas Law, a community college is prohibited from using money it collected from property taxes excised in one county to build facilities in another county. When SWTJC originally created the first tri-county junior college district in Texas 1947, the College was only required to provide educational services to citizens within its taxing area. However, by 1996 the responsibility for SWTJC was expanded by an additional 8 counties assigned by the State to provide academic access. Interestingly, as discussed in Chapter 5, the cities in SWTJC’s service area that have the largest enrollments are Del Rio (Val Verde County)
and Eagle Pass (Maverick County), and those counties are not subject to the ad valorem tax imposed by the College because they are “outside” the taxing district but “within” the service area for SWTJC. Thus, SWTJC is not allowed to use property tax revenue collected in Uvalde, Real, or Zavala Counties to build facilities in the cities of Del Rio and Eagle Pass. Rodolfo Flores then Chairman of the SWTJC Board of Trustees, discussed the creation of the SWTJC Foundation. It was a group of Board members that found a new way to raise capital. With a few generous gifts, the Foundation has the capability of applying for bank loans and then “rents” the land and/or building to SWTJC, or in some cases Sul Ross State University. The College uses interest generated to handle infrastructure and repairs, noting that anything left over is placed in scholarships (Thomas, 2005, p. 179).

The formation of the SWTJC Foundation allowed for the construction of buildings in Eagle Pass and in Del Rio. This is an important fact to consider because the Cities of Eagle Pass and Del Rio are outside of SWTJC’s taxing district. Without the Foundation’s assistance those sites would never grow. However, the Foundation does exist and the growth has been astonishing. Figure 7.8 Enrollment of Top 3 Campuses, illustrates the metamorphosis to becoming a regional college experienced by SWTJC from 1998-2015. In 1998, the Uvalde campus was easily considered the main campus then boasting 42% of total enrollment, followed by Eagle Pass with 24% and Del Rio at 22%. By 2004-05, enrollment at the Uvalde campus reduced by 13% from 2,287 to 1,971. The Del Rio campus increased enrollment by 33%, from 1,222 enrolled in 1998-99 to 1,631 in 2004-05 and Eagle Pass increased by 56% from 1,314 in 1998-99 to 2,048 in 2004-05. It is in 2004-05 that Eagle Pass becomes and remains the campus with the largest enrollment. By 2014-15, Del Rio appears to be the next campus to challenge the enrollment of the main campus in Uvalde. The incremental growth in Eagle Pass and Del Rio
confirm the need for access to higher education. However, for those living outside of SWTJC
taxing district, the cost for attendance is considerably more as they will be charged tuition and
fees specific to living “out of district.” The unintended consequences of Texas’ funding model
for community college remains financially punitive to Texas citizens living outside of a
community college taxing district while simultaneously placing the community college in the
dilemma of providing services to the State-assigned service area.
Figure 7.8

*Enrollment of Top 3 Campuses*

Data Source: SWTJC Institutional Research
CHAPTER 8:
TRANSFORMATION ON THE BORDER: FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER RCCI ENDED

Introduction: Rural community colleges and regional economic uplift

Since the 1980s, there has been no federal program specifically targeted to aid the 90 rural community and tribal colleges that serve rural Americans living in the 319 counties classified by the Economic Research Service as having persistent poverty and unemployment. While the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Commission have developed enviable records of service to the largely rural counties they serve, they did not target their region’s rural community colleges as tools of social uplift.

Prior to the establishment of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the decision by multi-billionaire Warren Buffett to invest a large percentage of his wealth into that Foundation, the two largest American foundations for the forty years between 1960 and 2000 were the Ford and the W.K. Kellogg Foundations. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, each had a major program aimed at rural community colleges. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Project Academy for Community College Leadership, Innovation, and Modeling (ACCLAIM), hosted by North Carolina State University between 1983 and 1996, developed a community-based programming model with 17 formal steps, to help community colleges choose which community-based issues they could involve themselves in to lift up their communities. Two pilot colleges each were chosen from the states of Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. While not specifically targeted toward rural community colleges, all but one of the eight pilot colleges were classified by the 2005 Basic Classification of the Carnegie Foundation.
for the Advancement of Teaching as rural-serving. The two books, *Community Leadership through Community-Based Programming: The Role of the Community College* and *Community-Based Programming in Action: The Experiences of Five Community Colleges*, published by the American Association of Community Colleges that document the many lessons learned essentially documented effective practices and efforts at community-based programming by community colleges in rural areas.

The second major foundation-funded program, the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), between 1994 and 2002 invested over $43 million in grants to 25 pilot colleges to improve living conditions for rural Americans in the 319 counties classified as persistent poverty and unemployment by the 1990 Census. Roughly 90 public rural community and tribal colleges serve these 319 counties. The RCCI program, managed by MDC, Inc., of Chapel Hill, NC, selected 18 publicly controlled rural community colleges and 7 tribal colleges located in the high poverty regions of Appalachia, the Lower Mississippi Delta, the Four Corners region of the American southwest, the remote areas of the High Plains, and the border region of the Mexican border in Texas. Nine colleges were selected to participate in the first round of Ford Foundation funding, and 16 in the second round. The purpose behind the planning and program grants were to help these colleges extend access and economic development.

The $17.2 million program was managed by MDC of Chapel Hill, North Carolina from 1994 until 2003. The two primary goals of the RCCI were to expand access to higher education and economic development. MDC’s framework provided to the RCCI to lift economically distressed regions had evolved from the President’s Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC). The PARC was created after a visit to the region by a newly elected President of the United
States, John F. Kennedy. George Autry, the founder of MDC, had been intimately involved with the PARC and other anti-poverty programs.

But did RCCI actually make a difference?

Foundations and federal grant programs regularly ask grantees to describe how the funded activities will become embedded in the daily life of the institutions they fund. For grant writers, finding the appropriate language and statistics to justify embeddedness borders on an art form. But it is exceedingly rare to find studies that retrospectively, five or ten years after funding runs out, if the programs that were funded were actually embedded or not, and if the lessons proclaimed were actually learned. The Ford Foundation invested $355,000 in planning and programming grants at Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) between 1995 and 2002, with the purpose of extending access and providing economic development. The funding went for distance learning, and to provide specialized staff in areas the college did not have before (grant writing, workforce training, etc.). Fifteen years later, in 2017, what happened to access and economic development at SWTJC? Did the Ford Foundation funding help the College expand its programs and services, and by doing so, put a rural community college that serves on of our country’s most impoverished areas on a firmer financial base? Did the Ford Foundation funding help SWTJC improve the lives of the people and communities it serves, and if so, how?

These are important questions today, given the emphasis on rural voters in the 2016 presidential election. There has not been a major private foundation-funded program since the RCCI ended abruptly with the “dot-com” stock market bubble burst in 2002. Southwest Texas Junior College’s journey to becoming a regional college was the focal point of Christopher J. Thomas’s 216-page 2005 University of North Texas doctoral dissertation study. However, Thomas’s extensive field work concluded as funding from the Ford Foundation was abruptly
ended, when the Ford Foundation and many foundations had to slash funding commitments as their endowment incomes fell sharply with the 2002 “dot-com” bubble burst. Not enough time had passed, Thomas concluded, to determine if the gains in expanded access to higher education would survive after the RCCI funding ran out. Additionally, the funded workforce training/economic development activities had not had enough time to mature. These are important factors to document because the RCCI has been the sole national program for rural community colleges funded by a major foundation in the United States over the past 15 years.

As major philanthropic foundations and federal officials reconsider their approaches to persistent poverty, they would do well to consider retrospectively the experiences of a rural community college like Southwest Texas Junior College. Even though the target is moving, and the long term cuts in state investment in public higher education operating budgets are well-known, there are important lessons that can be learned.

Vastness of Space: The Context of Southwest Texas Junior College

Southwest Texas Junior College opened its doors on October 14, 1946. Under Texas’ 1947 enabling law, SWTJC formed the first three county taxing district to establish a new junior college. Once the citizens of Real, Uvalde, and Zavala counties voted to form the taxing district, property taxes could provide a consistent revenue stream to fund community college programs and services. State aid would soon follow. The total population in the three counties was 29,965 in 1950, covering 3,561 square miles of a vast rural south Texas region. SWTJC’s main campus was established on the decommissioned Garner Air Base in Uvalde. Katsinas’ (1994) unpublished site notes for the Ford Foundation described SWTJC as being a predominantly transfer-oriented college known locally as “Uvalde’s College for Uvalde,” with limited services
being provided in the 8 additional counties formally assigned to SWTJC’s service delivery region following 1996 state legislation.

The southwest Texas region along the Mexico border had long been one characterized by persistent poverty. Persistent poverty, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, is when 20% or more of the population lives in poverty for three or more consecutive decades (U.S. Census, 2014). The three original taxing counties of SWTJC—Real, Uvalde, and Zavala counties—were classified as possessing persistent poverty in 1990, 2000, and 2010.

Prior to the SWTJC’s 1995 involvement with Ford Foundation’s RCCI, expanding access to higher education and workforce training was confined to the original tri-county taxing district. This is in part due to Senate Bill 390, passed in 1995, which was the first time when all 254 counties in the State of Texas were assigned to one of the 50 existing community college districts. As a result of SB 390, SWTJC was assigned eight additional counties for a total of 11 counties. A vast area larger than eight states—an additional 13,151 square miles was added. Prior to this time, without formally assigned counties, there was a practical disincentive for the SWTJC Board of Trustees and administration to invest in the physical plants in the two largest towns in the region—Del Rio in Val Verde county (population 10,433), and Eagle Pass in Maverick county (population 36,378), because state law could come in and assign those counties to another college district. Thus it can be fairly said that while the Truman Commission urged states to create institutions to deliver the 13th and 14th years of higher education to all citizens, the dream of universal geographic access did not become a reality until two generations later.

But the assignment of these and to provide educational services only served to compound the problem of distance. No additional funding was given to the SWTJC board of trustees; in fact, quite the opposite—Senate Bill 390 did not allow for the new district of 11 counties to have
a single up or down vote to fund community college services. Thus, all seven of SWTJC’s trustees come from the three counties whose citizens are taxed, even though these counties serve less than 3 of 10 residents districtwide in a vast area of 16,712 square miles. Additionally, SWTJC inherited seven more counties with a long-standing history of living in persistent poverty (only one county among the eleven, Medina, in the state-assigned service delivery region, was not classified as possessing persistent poverty in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

The distances and poverty only magnify SWTJC’s challenges in delivering access to higher education. During the mid-1990s the availability of the Internet remained largely limited to urban centers, with much more limited if not minimal access to rural America. Prior to the Ford Foundation funding in 1996, SWTJC students were required to travel to whichever campus was offering the needed program or class. The shortest drive between the main campus in Uvalde and the two largest satellite campuses in Del Rio and Eagle Pass is over an hour, one way (the College offered an extensive bus system, and it was not uncommon for students in Eagle Pass to get on a bus before sunrise to arrive in Uvalde in time for their 8:00 am classes).

SWTJC’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative began just as SB 390 was expanding the formal service area. This reality was an inducement for Ford Foundation officials to include SWJTJC among the original nine pilot colleges (Katsinas, 2014, personal interview). Could Ford Foundation funding assist “Uvalde’s College for Uvalde” to evolve into a truly regional college?

Southwest Texas Junior College through RCCI becomes the Region’s Community College

In the view of this author, SWTJC’s journey to becoming a regional college began with its selection as a RCCI pilot college in 1995. This decision was recommended to Ford by the Parkersburg Study, performed by Eldon Miller and Robert Pedersen, that guided the Ford
Foundation in their work immediately prior to the selection of MDC, Inc., as the entity to manage RCCI. Pedersen hired Stephen G. Katsinas, who was transitioning from work at Oklahoma State University to the University of Toledo to visit five rural-remote regions in the U.S. to conduct the critical background field work needed to assist MDC in determining the initial “pilot colleges” that would be chosen to participate in the RCCI.

This chapter reconsiders the original three research questions that guided this extended case study: (1) Did Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative matter in the lives of the students it serves, and if so, how? 1a) What ways it impacted access to higher education? 1b) It transformed finances at SWTJC? 1c) It changed how the faculty executed their responsibilities? 1d) What ways it altered the organization? 2) Did Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative matter in the economic development of the communities it serves, and if so, how? 3) What activities, if any, generated by Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative are embedded in the life of the College a decade after participation ended?

Without doubt, the author believes that Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the RCCI mattered in the lives of the students it serves. Access to higher education has increased dramatically as documented by increases in fall enrollment, unduplicated headcount, and credit contact hours generated, as well as associate’s degrees and certificates awarded. Fall semester enrollment increased by 72% from 1994 to 2013. The College outpaced community college enrollment rate by nearly double the increases across the State of Texas and the United States. In more recent years between 2004 and 2013, SWTJC has continued to outpace the national fall semester enrollment increases, as it keeps pace with Texas.
Quirks in Texas’ funding model for community colleges might be the cause for the leveling of SWTJC’s enrollment. Senate Bill 390 created the distinction of in-district versus out-of-district student charges. *Those students outside of the taxing district but inside the eleven county state-assigned service area are require to pay 61% more than those students living in-district.* Another measure of access to higher education is the total number of unique unduplicated students attending SWTJC. From 1995-96 to 2014-15 unduplicated head count grew from 4,600 to 7,157 or 54%. By 2010-11, this figure had grown to 8,196, and by 2013-14 it was 8,425.

Contact credit hours become extremely important in the Texas funding model, because contact hours and not enrollments per se provide the base for formula funding. SWTJC saw a 55% increase in contact credit hours generated from 1993-94 to 2012-13. General education or “Academic” contact hours grew by 67%, while “Technical” hours generated grew by 25%. Unfortunately, since SWTJC’s growth did not keep pace with Texas statewide growth average of 87%, it means that SWTJC received less total state dollars and far less per average credit hour. Statewide, Texas’ fast growth means that a pot of money only marginally larger in 2012-13 compared to 1993-94 is spread over much expanded pool of students enrolled. The inability to fund growth is a key challenge facing Texas community colleges.

The state policy choice of not funding contact hour growth in practice has translated into a devolution of financial responsibilities to local community college taxing districts and to students. State funding shortfalls mean higher tuition charges. Tuition per contact hour has risen for both students in the three counties in SWTJC’s taxing district and the eight in the service area that area outside the taxing district. These differences have only magnified in recent years. By 2013-14, 66% of total credit contact hours were delivered to students from outside of the taxing
district, while just 34% were delivered in-district. While this means SWTJC’s makeup of credits better reflects the relative percentages of the total population living in-taxing district and out, it clearly means that two-thirds of the students and their families are paying much more. Since seven of the eight counties added in 1995 were classified by the Census Bureau as high poverty counties, it means that federal student aid and most notably Pell grants go much farther for students who were lucky enough to have been born in SWTJC’s original three county taxing district.

An important objective for SWTJC in its RCCI proposal was to increase the number of technical degrees and certificates, in order to be less dependent on academic transfer degrees and to better serve the economic development/workforce training needs of the region. Degree and certificate completion represents an important measure of success after gaining initial access to higher education. While the majority of the increase in degrees and certificates awarded at SWTJC occurred in the first years of RCCI participation, from 1994 to 2004, that total degrees and certificates awarded grew by 191% from 1994-95 to 2013-14 is convincing evidence that SWTJC has transitioned into the region’s community college. Over this same period, Academic degrees awarded grew by 202%, technical certificates awarded grew by 252%, and Technical degrees awarded grew by 70%. Clearly, SWJTC’s participation in RCCI expanded overall access and broadened the curricula.

The Ford Foundation grants came as finances were shifting significantly for Texas community colleges in two important ways. First, state aid was falling rapidly, forcing large increases in tuition costs and property taxes. With an ability under state law to tax just three of its eleven counties, SWTJC was forced to become much more dependent on student-driven tuition. In 1998-99 SWTJC had a total budget of $19,866,003 of that $6,275,278 or 32% were from state
appropriations, $3,303,465 or 17% were from tuition and fees, $469,389 or 2% were from ad-
valorem taxes, $6,617,367 or 33% from federal grants, $526,572 or 3% were from state grants
and $2,673,932 or 13% were from “other.” Pell Grants received in 1998-99 by SWTJC were
categorized as federal grants. Revenue receive in 1998-99 from Pell Grants were $4,400,130 in
in effect accounting for 22% of total revenue. According to Anne Tarski, SWTJC Vice President
of Finance, reporting requirements changed between 2008 and 2009 financial statements
requiring a change in reporting revenue for Pell Grants from “federal grants” to “other”. By
2014-15, SWTJC had a total budget of $35,600,110 of that $8,906,925 or 25% were from state
appropriations, $5,567,283 or 16% were from tuition and fees, $3,121,746 or 9% were from ad-
valorem taxes, $1,649,023 or 5% from federal grants, $1,279,914 or 4% were from state grants
and $35,600,110 or 32% were from “other.” Revenue receive in 2014-15 from Pell Grants were
$11,536,751 in effect accounting for 32% of total revenue.

The operating budget for SWTJC dramatically increased, but this increase did not
account for inflation. From 1995 to 2014, SWTJC’s total operating funds increased by 136%,
just slightly above the 129% increase in inflation. The College’s property taxes were increased
by 225% from 1995 to 2014, however, only for the three original taxing counties. These
property tax increases in Real, Uvalde, and Zavala counties occurred at a time when the value of
the property being taxed increased by 164%. That local citizens are willing to increase to tax
themselves at a rate that exceeds the increasing value of their property is strong evidence that the
citizens SWTJC serves values what the College provides.

As SWTJC approached its Ford Foundation application, its leaders were well aware that
Texas was going to be challenged to fund projected enrollment growth. SWTJC leaders were
also well aware of the problems associated with in- and out-of-taxing district issues. For both of
these reasons and others, a top goal for SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI to support a full-time grant writer to “fish” for grants. Total funding from grants prior to SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI totaled about $5,000,000 in 1994. The 58 grants that SWTJC received from 2001 to 2014 totaled $24,697,493, with a success rate of about 70%. State funding continues to decline, forcing community colleges like Southwest Texas Junior College to pursue more grants. But grant funding comes with restrictions on each and every grant, which in turn leaves funding streams that are less malleable within the institution. This creates a conflict because even as the College’s budget is much larger, there is far less flexibility within its component parts, which is challenging for smaller colleges like SWTJC.

The Federal Pell Grant provides money to eligible students with no burden of repayment. The Pell Grant continues to assist Texas citizens in obtaining access to higher education. Pell Grants now effectively account for 32% of total revenues at SWTJC. There are 45% of the total unduplicated headcount (individual students) receiving the Pell Grant in 2014-15. There has been a slight adjustment in the percentage or recipients award from 1998-99 to 2014-15 from 43% to 45%. Conversely, the number of individuals receiving a Pell Grant has increased by nearly 50% or an additional 1,072 students. It is important to understand the negative impact on students that are attempting to finance college in Texas. Reduced state funds lead to an increase in tuition and fees that in turn eats away at the students Pell Grant. Adding insult to injury, the reality is that a student living in the SWTJC service area but outside of the taxing district will pay 61% more for the same educational experience and will cause their Pell Grant to vanish much sooner. The resulting additional cost for attendance has the potential to slow enrollment and slow graduation rates.
The financial impact that RCCI had on SWTJC’s participation has been and remains colossal. The creation of the SWTJC Foundation and the specialized expertise SWTJC leaders received about how to do off-balance sheet financing for facilities like a large urban Miami-Dade College did was instrumental in SWTJC’s regional expansion. Katsinas (1994) was correct when he stated that if SWTJC can fix the facilities issue, access to higher education can be expanded. Both Katsinas (1994) and the Parkersburg Study flatly concluded that rural community colleges serving high poverty regions like SWTJC lacked this kind of specialized technical expertise. Clearly, once these lessons were learned, as SWTJC officials and their friendly local banks quickly applied these financing techniques, the physical plants in Del Rio and Eagle Pass, the source of most of the College’s enrollment growth in the past two decades, were dramatically expanded. The creation and aggressive use of the SWTJC Foundation to raise private donations to help build facilities in the “out-of-district” locations are a critically important part of this story.

To become a truly regional community college requires a culture that thinks regionally. Technology when combined with better connectivity has the ability to connect people and places in the vast open spaces of southwest Texas to expand access. No doubt should exist about SWTJC’s commitment to becoming and remaining regionally-minded. SWTJC acquired the technology to connect the College to the 22 independent school districts in its 11 counties by means of an interactive video network in the mid-1990s. The ability to purchase the technology to install an interactive video network was a direct result of participating in the RCCI. The grant writer hired via RCCI funds soon would write a federal Title III Strengthening Developing Institutions grant of $1.6 million to build what is today known as SWTNet, an interactive video network still in use as of 2016, with additional technology upgrades over the years.
Faculty at SWTJC use ever-more technology to deliver course content over the years, and changes in curriculum and faculty expertise have occurred directly due to SWTJC’s participation in RCCI. Amanda Hadley, Director of Vocational Nursing, was responsible for creating a new nursing program, the first to be delivered via the new SWTNet distance learning network. SWTJC defines Distance Education as any class where the physical location of the student is different from the location of the instructor. The video conferencing capability of the connected ISDs allows students to access higher education at remote locations, to expand dual enrollment in high school while allowing SWTJC to gain more efficient economies of scale (for example, lower enrollment sophomore-level mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics classes that would not make at one location [say Eagle Pass] can be run at all locations simultaneously. This is a more efficient use of faculty resources. Hadley recalls that shortly after agreeing to be the initial SWTNet Guinea pig, following strong encouragement by Hector Gonzales, who was at that time Dean of Instruction,

And I said, “Oh, I just don’t know it’s going to be too hard to teach nursing because you know we have a program in Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass.” But I said, “Okay, okay, Hector I’ll try it.” We had a meeting shortly after that with all three programs in one room and nobody wanted to do it, nobody! Today, distance education is the only way the course is delivered (Hadley, 2016).

This study found that SWTJC significantly expanded their total course offerings over time with the goal of aligning them with the needs of the region. The distance learning network, to cite just one example, provided the College with a powerful tool to better deploy their most valuable asset—their faculty’s time—in multiple locations across the region. Prior to participation in RCCI, SWTJC had a grand total of one program at multiple locations outside of
Uvalde, a fact that likely explains the mantra “Uvalde’s junior college.” As of 2014, a total of 17 programs are offered outside of Uvalde. By 2014, the College provided access to 29 degrees and/or certificates with over half (52%) offered at the three largest campuses in Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and Uvalde. This has impacted how faculty do their jobs—they clearly require technical expertise to deliver course content and student support at a distance. Connie Buchanan, Division Chair of Business, Industry, and Technical Studies, captured the expansive nature of the distance learning network as a tool that breaks through the state-defined boundaries of their service area, “We’re ever evolving, now it’s more video conferencing, and online students no longer come to our door, so we have had to evolve and become accessible to them, because they’re going to get their education somewhere and we want to get them here at SWTJC. We’re trying very hard on working in that area (online-video) … So, we no longer are defined by the eleven counties. In my accounting class I have someone in Germany right now taking the class. So, the geographical area has changed from Uvalde to global now, in my opinion. And so, the college is learning with growing pains and we are successfully going in the right direction” (Buchanan, 2016).

The growth in the total enrollment resulted in an opportunity to do a great deal of additional faculty hiring. In 1994-95, the number of full-time faculty employed across all SWTJC locations was 60; by 2014-15, that number had grown by 78% to 107. SWTJC made a conscious choice to find and hire more minority faculty, so that their total faculty workforce better reflects the racial and ethnic make-up of the region’s population. In 2010, 70% of the population in the 11 counties served by SWTJC were Hispanic. In 1994-95, SWTJC’s full-time faculty were 80% white and 20% Hispanic. By 2014-15, 50% were white, 48% were Hispanic, and 3% were other.
In 2005, Thomas concluded SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI assisted the College in more fully fulfilling its mission as a comprehensive community college for the region (p. 204). The change from “Uvalde’s college for Uvalde” to a regional College can be observed in the adjustments made in the organizational structure. In his 1994 case study notes, Katsinas predicted that the right combination of strategy and organizational structure would be at the cornerstone of any good rural community college program (1994, p. 4). The organizational structure documented in 2000-01 (Appendix D) shows the functional structure of the College in 1996. That structure remained intact through 2009-10, with minimal adjustments and some fine tuning for specialization hires in areas such as IT and grant writing. The 2009-10 organizational chart for SWTJC shows the three deans reporting directly to the President and the inclusion of a new third-level unit named campus. That “campus” became its own entity on the organizational chart signaled to being more than Uvalde’s junior college. The term “outreach center” appeared for the first time on the 2009-10 organizational chart. The outreach department assists students with barriers to enrollment, traveling to SWTJC’s remote locations to register about 2,000 dual-credit and early college high school students each academic year, as well as what at SWTJC are called “local articulations” (formerly, tech prep). One student interviewed, Felicia Garcia, told the researcher she might have been more successful the first time she attempted college had the outreach center existed at that time (Garcia, 2016).

The hiring of a full-time professional grant-writer changed SWTJC’s organization in several ways. First, SWTJC’s prominent involvement with the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative directly led to invitations to participate in other national grant-funded programs such as the Lumina Foundation’s Achieving the Dream program. SWTJC was encouraged to apply for The Aspen Prize. From a purely financial standpoint, the College prior
to its participation in RCCI had received very few grants, and the additional funding clearly impacted what is reflected in the College’s organizational chart. Figure 5.2 shows a new grouping of deans reporting to a Vice President and not directly to the President. The role of the dean did not diminish by moving down one more level removed from the President. Rather, the introduction of Vice Presidents allowed the Deans to focus more intently within their disciplines. For the first time, in 2014, two of the Vice Presidents are specific to Del Rio and Eagle Pass to provide leadership and advocacy. SWTJC’s evolution over the past twenty years as seen through the transformation of its organizational structure reflects the transformation and broadening in mission to become a comprehensive, regionally-based community college.

Another key change occurred in 2016, when SWTJC hired its first Chief Information Officer (CIO), Raul Reyes, Jr. Reyes steps into SWTJC wearing two hats as CIO and chief Public Relations Officer (PRO). Just five months later, he was promoted to Vice President for Administrative Services while retaining his other titles as CIO and PRO. It is worth noting Katsinas noted in 1994 that many rural community colleges have staff that wear more than one hat, and lack specializations. Hiring a full-time Public Relations Officer role was one of the capacity building positions encouraged by the RCCI. Sadly, both the full-time grant writer and full-time public relations officers hired via RCCI funding have retired, and the College has no plans to replace those positions. Like many small colleges SWTJC team members will wear multiple hats. In 2016, three other individuals initially hired as a result of SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI are likely to retire soon (Drs. Burchfield, Aranda, and LaRue).
Southwest Texas Junior College’s Expanded Involvement in Economic Development

The second research question for this study asked if SWTJC’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative mattered in the economic development of the communities it serves, and if so, how? As President Hector Gonzales noted in a 2016 interview, “There’s not a whole lot of industry [here]…and a lot of wide open spaces (Gonzales, 2016).” Without doubt, this is an accurate assessment of the region. President Gonzales is challenged to lead SWTJC in providing access to higher education while being a catalyst for economic development.

This study found that SWJTC’s involvement in economic development dramatically expanded over the past twenty years, and that involvement in RCCI was a key catalyst. One of the best examples of RCCI’s impact is in workforce training. Prior to RCCI, SWTJC offered a very small number of workforce training programs. Workforce training contact hours at SWTJC increased from approximately 20,000 in 1994 to 131,158 in 2013, an increase of 556% in non-credit contact hours delivered. A good example of the expanded mission of the College is the new Aviation Maintenance Program created and offered as an advanced certificate at SWTJC’s Del Rio Campus. That program has placed seventeen of the twenty-four students enrolled as full-time aviation mechanics at nearby Laughlin Air Force Base. It is important to add that 17 of the 24 received federal Pell Grants, 2 took out student loans, and 2 received Texas Public Educational Grant’s (TPEG). Just 2 of the 24 students served did not apply for financial aid.

Achieving a college degree or certification provides the beginning step towards the American Dream of upward mobility. Many agree that education provides the individual with the potential to increase their wage earning ability. Low educational attainment hinders advancement from poverty. Education levels were described in the May 22, 1994 RCCI Implementation Grant Proposal. SWTJC reported that the region’s population possessed an average of only 9.6 years of
education, and that number dropped to 6.4 years for Hispanics. From 1990 to 2010, the percentage of the population age 25 or older with less than a high school diploma decreased by an 11-county average of approximately 15%. Also, the percentage of the population ages 25 or older with high school diploma, some college, or a Bachelor’s degree have all increased by approximately 5% of the total population in SWTJC’s service area.

An important goal is employment after educational attainment. From 1990 to 2010, the percent of population that was unemployed decreased by approximately 2%. Additionally, the average median income for the region increased by more the $15,000. Probably the most important measure is the lowering of the percentages still living in poverty. For example, Maverick County saw nearly 20% of its adult population lifted out of poverty in twenty years. The percent of population living in poverty decreased by approximately 11% when averaging the 20-year journey from 1990 to 2010 for all 11 counties. The life-changing impact of moving individuals out of persistent poverty cannot be understated.

It is important to note that the 2010 Census year also was near the low point of the most severe recession since the Great Depression. Between 1990 and 2010, the percentage of Americans living in poverty rose by 2.3%, bringing the national percentage to 15.8%. The Texas statewide average grew by 2.1% over this same period to 17.5%. Between 1990 and 2010, the percentage of those living in poverty across the 11 counties served by SWTJC declined by 8.3%. But this is no cause for celebration, because the progress made in the Southwest Texas region to lift individuals out of poverty was nearly 35%, roughly double that of the U.S. and Texas. Still, median family income rose by more than $15,000 on average across the 11-county region. Much progress has been made and much work remains to be done. All 11 counties in SWTJC’S state-
assigned service area were classified as living in persistent poverty in 1990, and by 2010 only one county (Medina at 17%) was able to drop that label.

The Embeddedness of RCCI-Funded Activities in SWTJC 15 Years After

The third research question of this study was to assess what activities, if any, generated by Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative were embedded in the life of the College fifteen years after participation ended. The RCCI was a national demonstration project that focused on the potential of rural community colleges in economically distressed regions as tools to promote access and economic development, and by doing so, increase job, income, and a better way of life for rural people. The RCCI’s goal was therefore to enhance the participating college’s capacity to provide economic leadership for their respective regions.

The Vision-to-Action framework that guided the RCCI built upon the unique “respected neighbor persona” that community colleges possess. The RCCI framework consists of participation from public, private and nonprofit sectors, to

“...close the gaps that separate people from opportunity. An essential part of MDC’s philosophy is that the pathway to opportunity is cleared by creating equity—removing the social, financial, and educational barriers that make it harder for those left behind to take advantage of the opportunities America offers. We do this by first creating a will for change—getting to know a community or organization, connecting leaders across social and political lines, and helping them understand the particular barriers they face. We highlight gaps through historical and statistical research, we identify solutions with a high potential for success, and we mobilize leaders to address the issues raised. From that work comes sustainable programs and systemic change that can connect people with the
financial supports to stabilize their lives, the education and training they need to get better jobs, and the industries that will benefit from their labors and improve the entire community.” (MDC, 2012, p. 1)

Community colleges are trusted across social classes providing a “common ground”, whereas other institutions are not (MDC, 2001). It was believed that community colleges possessed that missing spark to act as a catalyst to quickly bring together a region for collaboration.

The RCCI framework engaged its 25 pilot colleges in goal and priority setting using the Vision to Action Toolkit. The toolkit was a collection of a proven nine-step process to aid colleges in developing collaborations and setting strategic goals with their regional partners. The two main goals of the Vision to Action Toolkit was to increase access to higher education and economic development. After a seven-month planning process by the College, using the Vision to Action toolkit from September 1994 to April 1995, they produced an implementation grant that was submitted to the Ford Foundation for potential funding. The Vision to Action toolkit provided a process to strategically plan and to provide the required information to apply for other grant opportunities.

MDC, Inc. warned participating colleges to not become too rigid in the execution of the nine-steps of moving from vision to action. These nine steps embody the spirit of the RCCI approach to expanding access to higher education and to becoming a catalyst for economic development. The frame work was taught to SWTJC participants using a trainer. The researcher was not able to interview the RCCI trainer, but did spend extensive time with Dr. Mitchel Burchfield, who wrote many of the grants during RCCI involvement. Burchfield recalls learning the process, and being intrigued by Kurt Lewin’s force field model used in step five (2016). The nine steps are as follows: (1) collect and analyze data, (2) describe the current situation, (3)
create a vision, (4) set goals, (5) develop strategies, (6) analyze stakeholders’ influence, (7) plan for funding and sustainability, (8) plan for action, and (9) plan an evaluation.

The RCCI framework would be used for other grant-funded opportunities later in SWTJC’s future. These steps provide clarity to strategic planning processes in a manner that those who have never participated in strategy planning would be able to understand (Chapter 2 provides greater detail as to each of these steps). Dr. Burchfield was the only individual interviewed that remembered the RCCI’s nine-step process. The basic philosophy was to empower individuals and give them the ability to become self-reliant; the additional grants SWTJC has been able to acquire since their participation with the RCCI demonstrates institutional success as well. That few can recall specifics in its own way speaks to how well the process became embedded at the institution.

SWTJC practically applied MDC’s design for change when they hosted a Case Competition in their fourth year of RCCI participation in 1998. The primary question to answer was, “what is needed in our region?” Through the funding provided by the Ford Foundation, SWTJC was able to create a regional event that not only focused on the question, “what is needed?” but also to begin launching of the process to rebrand the College as an active region-minded player. It gave voice to SWTJC as genuinely concerned about the welfare and success of the people across the region and not just in Uvalde. The level of trust rose for the College because of reputable people and corporations working with SWTJC. For example, when the small rural town of Uvalde, Texas has the support of the Ford Foundation and former Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe (an Uvalde native), that goes a long way to show trustworthiness.

There is no evidence that the College has ever been untrustworthy. But the case competition put the entire region on notice that SWTJC had arrived as a regional player and
leader that they could absolutely count on. The title, “Transforming the Regional Economy of Southwest Texas: A Case Competition,” spoke to the desire to create and produce new thinking about economic development across the Middle Rio Grande Region. Four state universities also competed: the University of Texas at San Antonio, Mississippi State University, San Diego State University, and Oklahoma State University. The problem presented to the competitors was to determine which sectors of the economy possessed growth potential.

Thomas (2005) noted that the staff at SWTJC participating in the Vision to Action process indicated it was one of the most beneficial and exciting planning activities in which they have ever participated (p. 202). The investment made by the College through RCCI funds and knowledge was enormous for the region. Many SWTJC employees participating in the RCCI had never traveled outside of the southwest Texas region. Burchfield recalls the impact of the extensive travel:

… it was a big deal, you know they would travel, they took us everywhere! We went to Mississippi and Kentucky to name a few. Wow, we learned a lot and made new friends and colleagues. I still get emails from some of them occasionally. In Mississippi, we went to the Choctaw Reservation and got to meet the Chiefs there and see how they were doing economic development. We went to Fort Peck, way up in Montana to see little tiny places where their reservations have tribal colleges. We also traveled just south of Glacier National Park to visit another Indian tribal college (Salish Kootenai). I was encouraged to see that they struggle in the same way the SWTJC struggles and that we are not alone. The other interesting item I learned during my time on the Indian reservations is that they have plans that stretch across five generations. (Burchfield, 2016, personal interview)
It is clear that MDC attempted to lead colleges through strategic planning without calling it strategic planning through the nine-step Vision to Action process. This researcher found that the Vision-to-Action process is still in use today at SWTJC, but that it is not labeled as such internally. During the researcher’s visits in 2016, it was difficult to locate individuals at the College that even remembered the acronym of RCCI or its original purpose. Dr. Burchfield is uniquely positioned to provide perspective on the RCCI activities started by SWTJC’s participation and which ones were sustained a decade after SWTJC participation ended.

Burchfield wrote the original planning grants to Ford for SWTJC’s participation in RCCI. He currently serves SWTJC as the Division Chair for Development Studies and Professor. Although he no longer writes grants, Burchfield recognizes the MDC framework in action. He understands the state of the College prior to its participation with the RCCI, and what activities the RCCI brought to the College. When the researcher asked about the number of employees still working for SWTJC that were a part of the RCCI (or even knew what the RCCI provided SWTJC). Burchfield indicated many had left the College, some had retired and some had moved on to leadership positions at other Colleges. He stated that participating in the RCCI was a very important event in the history of the College. When asked about what RCCI activities or methodologies that have remained at the College, Burchfield said

“Well, Vision to Action stayed you know, it stayed. That is what SWTJC’s planning process uses today even when they don’t call it Vision to Action anymore. Many of SWTJC employees don’t realize that the distance learning started there (Vision to Action). One of the items I include in all of my grant writing now is the sustainability plan. This was important because prior to the College’s involvement with the RCCI, the College would receive a grant to start a new something and when the grant money would
go away so did the new something. From that time forward I always included a plan for how the College would wean ourselves off of other people’s money.” (Burchfield, 2016)

The Eastern philosophy of teaching a person to fish instead of simply feeding a person applies to MDC’s approach. Step Seven requires a plan to maintain the forward momentum of the College’s strategic goals. Burchfield believed that those entities providing financial grants were just as invested in the ongoing success of the initiative started by their grants as would be the College. The requirement to provide both short and long term sustainability provides a vehicle to institutionalize those new activities spurred on by a grant. Institutionalizing RCCI activities were highlighted when the second and final continuation grant began accepting request for proposals (RFP). Pilot colleges like SWTJC were given an opportunity to apply for their second continuation grant up to $75,000. Toward the bottom of the RFP the following was written,

“PLEASE NOTE: Pilot colleges funds are a final and last grant. At this time, all the colleges are expected to be well on their way to institutionalizing the goals of RCCI while making substantial progress in terms of increasing access and enhancing the economy of their local regions. These guidelines for additional or final support will enable RCCI teams to reflect and begin the transition to full institutionalization.”

A good example of how RCCI’s nine-step Vision to Action process is used today can be found in how SWTJC created its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The QEP is a vital component of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation process. The College’s most current assessment from their SACS accreditation visit revealed no major issues and they will keep their accreditation with “no recommendations” for changes. This reverberated throughout the organization as a topic on the mind of every College employee, the
researcher found in his visits. Another example of institutionalizing RCCI activities occurred when SWTJC received grant monies from the RCCI of $40,000. Additionally, they received $1.6 million from federal Title III funds to build the College’s distance learning network to connect the 22 area high schools, and additional funding has been procured to update and improve SWTNet.

While SWTJC chose not to brand the new distance learning network as Ford Foundation’s Telecommunications Network, Burchfield explained that the College chose to institutionalize everything from the beginning to make it a part of the College and not some special grant program. Prior to RCCI’s involvement, he said, the College would receive a grant for a specific activity for a specific amount of time and once the grant monies were gone, so was the new activity. Therefore, the College chose to institutionalize the name of the new distance learning network as SWTnet instead of something like RCCI.net, he said. Institutionalizing grant activities from the beginning makes sense, and garnered stronger support from the Board of Trustees (Burchfield, 2016). Southwest Texas Junior College continues to make use of the distance learning network today, and it continues to use the lessons and framework taught to them by their involvement with the RCCI the embedded vision to action process.

Another example of embedded RCCI-initiated program is in the area of data driven decision-making. The activity of being data informed was brought by RCCI participation to SWTJC. The College today remains focused on data driven goals. Dr. Burchfield stated that everything about his involvement with the RCCI remained vivid in his memory. SWTJC has been a member of Achieving the Dream from the start, he said, and it holds the distinction of a Leader College. “The Achieving the Dream is just another incarnation of the RCCI,” explained Burchfield (2016).
Carol Lincoln agreed that SWTJC’s involvement with the RCCI prepared the College for their eventual participation in the Lumina Foundation’s Achieving the Dream initiative (Lincoln, 2014). Lincoln was the Senior Program Director at MDC responsible for directing the Rural Community College Initiative from 1994 through 2003. Lincoln is uniquely positioned to judge the relationship between SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI, and the impetus it provided to involvement with ATD. Lincoln currently serves as ATD’s Senior Vice President.

Recently, SWTJC President Hector Gonzales has adopted a program named 4DX. Where the nine-step Vision to Action plan assists in setting the goals and priorities, the 4DX process provides a method to get those goals accomplished. 4DX represents the 4 disciplines of execution written by Sean Covey, Chris McChesney, and Jim Huling designed to assist leaders execute on their strategic goals. The combination of activities related to ATD and 4DX provides a great example of how planting the seeds of change back in 1995 have grown into a true desire to plan, execute, and measure through the use of data and collaboration by the College.

Southwest Texas Junior College began to build institutional capacity by hiring a grant writer with RCCI funds. The grant writer recently retired, and with funding cuts, the College does not plan to replace this position in the immediate future. The task of grant writing will fall to SWTJC’s executive leadership as a team. The Public Relations Officer is another position that has expired with no intent by the College to replace. The duties of the public relation position have been absorbed by the Vice President for Administrative Services, along with those of the Chief Information Officer. Another critical RCCI-funded hire was the Director of Workforce Development, a position held by Romelia Aranda for the past 20 years. Ms. Aranda has no immediate plans to leave, and the RCCI-funded institutional research position remains in place.
and is doing well. These are important capacity building positions that need the right people with the right training to keep the momentum at SWTJC moving in a positive direction.

Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations for Further Study

This historical organizational case study documented the lasting institutional transformational change resulting from Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). A historical perspective approach provided a means to answer the “how” and “why” questions, whereby the researcher could rely on primary and secondary documents as well as cultural and physical artifacts as the main sources of evidence. As Yin notes (2009), a case study is preferred when examining contemporary events, and that approach adds two additional sources of evidence direct observation of the events being studied, and interviews of the person involved in the events. The framework provided by the late Burton R. Clark in the appendix of his seminal 1960’s work *The Open Door College*, about the evolution of San Jose Junior College (CA) allowed development of a picture of Southwest Texas Junior College prior to its involvement with the RCCI, following the institution to the point where the College is positioned fifteen years after the RCCI program ended.

A major function of the Ford Foundation funding was to upgrade SWTJC’s information technology systems, to provide distance learning to its three campuses and two outreach centers, spread across an 11-county “service-area” land mass larger than the State of Massachusetts. This work shed important light on if and how the Ford Foundation-sponsored activities and initiatives became institutionalized over time.

This study concludes that Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative made a difference in the College’s ability to impact the students
and communities it serves. The RCCI helped SWTJC move from “Uvalde’s college for Uvalde” to a truly regional player, one not afraid to take risks and become more than it was. The significant growth was reflected in expanded enrollments (72% increase) and degrees awarded (191% increase), the Del Rio and Eagle Pass centers transitioning into full-blown campuses, the profile of the degrees awarded and how certificate programs like Aviation Mechanics were tied to nearby jobs that are high-demand, high wage. The capacity-building grant writer and distance learning equipment funded by the RCCI led to further grants, with the result that students no longer have to get on buses before the sun rises to make 8:00 am classes at locations 70 miles away. The financial position of the College is dramatically improved, despite the deep cuts in credit hour funding from the State of Texas over the past two decades. The growth is reflected in the titles of Vice Presidents for each campus, instead of campus directors in 1994.

The expanded role of Southwest Texas Junior College in the economic development of the communities it serves is a second major conclusion of this study. This was demonstrated by the vast growth in non-degree credits (556% increase), and in the profile of offerings for business and industry. The much more active participation by College officials—involvement in regional economic development councils is no longer unusual; rather its “what you do” –a true sign of embeddedness of the broader community-building role held by SWTJC officials.

The third major conclusion of this study may be the most important, moving forward. This study found that RCCI activities are very much embedded in the life of the leadership and faculty at Southwest Texas Junior College fifteen years after RCCI participation ended. This can be observed in the work of key individuals responsible for functions such as workforce development and institutional research. Perhaps most important, the RCCI’s Vision to Action strategic planning process is so well embedded, that individuals use it without knowing that they
use it. This finding is of critical importance, in that following the 2016 election results, the attention of major philanthropic foundations is likely to return to the nation’s 600 rural community and tribal colleges. The intensive coaching provided by MDC in its administration of RCCI may have a better chance of producing longer term systemic change than other approaches. Much clearly can be learned from a study of the RCCI some fifteen years after SWTJC’s participation ended.

Recommendations for further study include the following: Expand research to include other RCCI participating pilot colleges, expand Don Hudson’s research to further define future funding models for Texas community colleges, study how rural community colleges in high poverty areas can use their internal reward systems to reinforce access and economic development goals, expand study to further explore dual credit and early college high school of the regions K-12’s.

First, rural community colleges faced with deep state budget cuts will be challenged to afford specialized staff. This problem, identified by Katsinas in 1994 and again in 1996, is exacerbated by deep cuts in state funding. A February 2016 study by The University of Alabama’s Education Policy Center found 159 of the nation’s 1,128 community, junior, and technical colleges received 15 percent or less of their total funding from their states, and 59 received 5 percent or less from their states (Katsinas, Malley, & Warner, 2016). That this researcher found SWTJC challenged to hire a replacement for the retired grant writer funded by RCCI initially in 1996 in this context, sadly, is no surprise.

Recommendations to Texas policy makers in light of the deep cuts in state funding should motivate tighter district service area alignment between regional economic development entities, such as the Middle Rio Grande Development Council (which has 9 counties), and
community colleges like SWTJC (which has 11). Closely aligned service maps has the potential to streamline services to Texas citizens. There’s just no reason why the State of Texas and other states do not have the maps match between the state-assigned service delivery areas of its community colleges and all other units of state government. Similarly, state action is needed so that the taxing district is the same as the service area, and a single vote is needed for action across the eleven counties, and trustee representation on the board should be from all eleven counties. Such action is needed in light of the current funding model that is punitive to poor rural Texas communities, underscoring the need to expand Texas Association of Community College research by Don Hudson to further define future funding models for Texas community colleges.

The researcher also believes the Ford Foundation should expand this study to examine how embedded RCCI activities are for the other 24 RCCI pilot colleges. A study as to how rural community colleges in high poverty areas can use their internal reward systems to reinforce access and economic development goals. Further study of how expanding the distance learning capacity at RCCI pilot colleges like SWTJC can be extended to other rural community colleges, with important positive benefits as to dual credit and early college high school policies, particularly in hard-to-serve regions characterized by persistent poverty.

At the national level, this study found persuasive evidence as to the critical importance of Pell grants to access. In one of America’s poorest regions, Pell grants are of vital importance, not just for access, but for economic development as well. They are particularly important as state funding cuts mean that community colleges like SWTJC have become increasingly more tuition driven. More study is needed in this area, with focus on how the average Pell and not the maximum Pell matter. SWTJC provided an excellent case study as to how Pell matters, because
over 75 percent of the students pay nearly 61% more in tuition than “in-taxing-district” students do. Finally, this study shows at the federal level the need to continue to expand the requirement in section 6013 of the 2014 Agriculture Act to include all divisions within the USDA, as part of its call for a Rural College Coordinated Strategy.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Tables from Dr. Thomas’ 2005 Dissertation

Enrollment expressed in credit contact hours, in-taxing district and out-of-taxing district, in-state-assigned service delivery area at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1999-00 to 2003-04.

Enrollment expressed in contact hours by type of programs at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1993-94 to 2003-04.

Annual unduplicated headcount by academic term (fall, spring, summer) at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1999-00 to 2003-04.

Total degrees and certificates awarded by type.

Programs offered at SWTJC campuses in 1994 and 2005.


Fall 2004 faculty at SWTJC.

Comparison of annual expenses between 1995 and 2000.

Estimated expenses and % budget, 2003-04.


Property tax rates assessed last 10 fiscal years, 1994-2004.

Appendix B

Figures from Dr. Thomas’ 2005 Dissertation

Population trends for the SWTJC service area.

Southwest Texas Junior College service area.

US rural publicly-controlled two-year colleges by Katsinas, Lacey, and Hardy classification type.

Cycle of development.


Southwest Texas Junior College organizational chart, 2001.

Southwest Texas Junior College organizational chart 2004.

Annual expenses, SWTJC, 1995-2000

Operating budget, SWTJC 2003-2004

Revenue by source, 1995 and 2004

Valuation – assessed vs. net assessed

Property tax rates – current operations vs total (1994-2004)
### Appendix C

Expanding Economic and Educational Opportunity in Distressed Rural Areas: Conceptual Framework Rural Community College Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical Past and Current Approaches</th>
<th>Approaches for the Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heavy dependence on natural resource base—agriculture, extraction, and timber.</td>
<td>Importance of intellectual, cultural, and civic resources for economic development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of industry, marketing cheap land, labor, and taxes.</td>
<td>Enhancing productivity and competitiveness of existing business and workers; help for new business start-ups. Strengthening the foundation for development, especially civic infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition among adjacent towns and counties.</td>
<td>Regional approach that involves business and civic leaders across town and county lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development priorities often set by one or two agencies, in a process dominated by established interests.</td>
<td>Priorities emerge from collaborative process involving multiple agencies and organizations, with broad-based community participation and support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on increasing the number of jobs.</td>
<td>Focus on raising the overall economic tide while also benefiting lower-income, lower-wealth residents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Southwest Texas Junior College Organizational Chart 2003-2004

Southwest Texas Junior College
Organizational Chart 2003 - 2004
Appendix F

Southwest Texas Junior College Organizational Chart 2014-2015 (v.1)
## Appendix G

Revenue by Source 20 Fiscal Years from 1995 to 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>State Appropriations</th>
<th>Tuition &amp; Fees*</th>
<th>Ad-Valorem Taxes</th>
<th>Federal Grants</th>
<th>State Grants</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>$5,144,225</td>
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<td>$366,196</td>
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<td>$198,767</td>
<td>$2,264,960</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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Appendix H


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<td>National Science Foundation Internet</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Title III Grant - Hispanic Serving Institutions</td>
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<td>Ford Foundation Rural Community College Initiative Implementation Grant</td>
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<td>Ford Foundation Rural Community College Initiative Cont. Grant I</td>
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<td>1996-97</td>
<td>State of Texas Skills Development Grant</td>
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<td>1996-99</td>
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<td>U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Hispanic Serving Institutions Education Grant - “Strengthening Agricultural Management Program through Internet Integration”</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Rural Utilities Services Distance Learning Grant</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>NASA - PreCollege Awards for Excellence in Mathematics, Science, Engineering, and Technology (PACE/ASET) Grant - Southwest Texas PACE/ASET Saturday/Summer Academy.</td>
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<td>Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board (TIF) Two-year College Library Grant - Internet &amp; Distance Learning</td>
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<td>TRIO/Student Support : Department of Education</td>
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<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>Infrastructure Support Program : Department of Defense</td>
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Data Source: SWTJC Fact Book 2000-2001
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<th>Mendez</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Rural Community College Initiative Planning Team for Southwest Texas Junior College</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Enrollment Expressed in Credit Contact Hours, In/Out of Taxing District 1999-00 to 2009-2010</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Comparison of Annual Duplicated and Unduplicated Headcount by Term 1999 to 2010 at Southwest Texas Junior College</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Total Degrees and Certificates Awarded from 1994-95 to 2009-10</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Programs Offered at Southwest Texas Junior College by Campus in 1994, 2005, 2010</td>
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<td>Updated (Expanded)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Comparing Total Southwest Texas Junior College Contact Hours by Program to Total Texas Community College's Contact Hours by Program (1993-2004, 2005-2010, 1993-2010)</td>
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<td>NEW</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>All Degrees and Certificates Awarded by Program from 1998 to 2010</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Updated (Expanded)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Race/Ethnicity of Full-Time Faculty at Southwest Texas Junior College from 1993 to 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Comparing Total Degrees and Certificates awarded by Type at Southwest Texas Junior College during 1994-95 to 2003-04, 2004-05 to 2009-10, and 1994-95 to 2009-10</td>
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<td>Fall 2010 Full-time and Adjunct Faculty by Gender and Ethnicity</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Estimated expenses and % budget, 2003-04 --&gt; Replaced by Figure (SWTJC Expenses Expressed by Percentage of Operating Budget, 2003-04 and 2009-10)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Replaced by Figure</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Southwest Texas Junior College Revenue by Source by Source 15 Fiscal Years 1995-2010</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Updated (Expanded)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Southwest Texas Junior College Net Assessed Valuations 15 Fiscal Years 1994-95 to 2009-10</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Updated (Expanded)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Property tax rates assessed last 10 fiscal years, 1994-2004. --&gt; Replaced by Figure (Property tax rates for Southwest Texas Junior College over 15 years period 1995-2010)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Replaced by Figure</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Chronology of Grants Received by Southwest Texas Junior College from 2001 to 2011</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Proposed Figures</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Mendez</td>
<td>New or Updated (Expanded)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Comparison of Population Trends for In-District and Out-District Service area of Southwest Texas Junior College 1990, 2000, and 2010</td>
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<td>U.S. Poverty Rates by County 2012</td>
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<td>Comparison of Poverty Trends for In-District, Out-District Service area of Southwest Texas Junior College and U.S. during census years 1990, 2000, and 2010</td>
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<td>Southwest Texas Junior College service area.</td>
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<td>US rural publicly-controlled two-year colleges by Katsinas, Lacey, and Hardy classification type.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Cycle of development.</td>
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<td>Not used (Yet)</td>
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<td>Southwest Texas Junior College Enrollment from 1981 to 2010 (Fall Semester)</td>
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<td>Southwest Texas Junior College organizational chart, 2001.</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Southwest Texas Junior College’s Annual Expenses from 1995 to 2010</td>
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<td>Southwest Texas Junior College Expenses Expressed by Percentage of Operating Budget, 2003-04 and 2009-10</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Southwest Texas Junior College Revenue by Source in 1995, 2004, and 2010 (Pie Chart)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Southwest Texas Junior College Revenue by Source in 1995, 2004, and 2010 (Bar Graph)</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Comparing Assessed and net Assessed property Valuations, 1994-95 to 2009-10</td>
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<td>(Valuation – assessed vs. net assessed) Replaced by Table (Southwest Texas Junior College Net Assessed Valuations 15 Fiscal Years 1994-95 to 2009-10)</td>
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<td>Updated (Expanded)</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Property tax rates for Southwest Texas Junior College over 15 years period 1995-2010</td>
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Economic Development Approaches for the Future

New economic realities in rural America demand new approaches to economic development. Rural development experts looking toward the next century urge communities to develop their human resources and a sound civic infrastructure, to assist new and existing businesses, and above all to take a collaborative, regional approach to development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical Past and Current Approaches</th>
<th>Approaches for the Future</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heavy dependence on natural resource base—agriculture, extraction, and timber.</td>
<td>Importance of intellectual, cultural, and civic resources for economic development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of industry, marketing cheap land, labor, and taxes.</td>
<td>Enhancing productivity and competitiveness of existing business and workers; help for new business start-ups. Strengthening the foundation for development, especially civic infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition among adjacent towns and counties.</td>
<td>Regional approach that involves business and civic leaders across town and county lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development priorities often set by one or two agencies, in a process dominated by established interests.</td>
<td>Priorities emerge from collaborative process involving multiple agencies and organizations, with broad-based community participation and support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on increasing the number of jobs.</td>
<td>Focus on raising the overall economic tide while also benefiting lower-income, lower-wealth residents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix K

Institutional Review Board

February 18, 2016

Larry Mendez
College of Education
The University of Alabama
Box 870231

Re: IRB # 16-OR-078, "Mendez-Southwest Texas Junior College and RCCI"

Dear Mr. Mendez:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on February 16, 2017. If your research will continue beyond this date, please complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped consent forms to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Signature Reduced
Informed Consent for a Non-Medical Study

Study title: Did the Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative Produce Transformational Change? A Case Study of Southwest Texas Junior College.

Investigator's Larry D. Mendez, Doctoral Student, University of Alabama.

You are being asked to take part in a research study.

This study is called "Did the Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative Produce Transformational Change? A Case Study of Southwest Texas Junior College. The study is being done by Larry D. Mendez, who is a graduate student at the University of Alabama. Mr. Mendez is being supervised by Professor Stephen G. Katsinas who is a Professor, Higher Education Administration and a Director, Education Policy Center at the University of Alabama.

Is the researcher being paid for this study?

This study and/or the investigator are not financially supported in any capacity.

Is this research developing a product that will be sold, and if so, will the investigator profit from it? No

Does the investigator have any conflict of interest in this study? NO

What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?

This study is being done to find out the impact the rural community colleges have in their region in terms of expanding access to higher education and acting as catalyst for economic development in their respective regions. This is the first study in history of a rural community college that has a twenty year perspective. There are 600 community colleges in the United States, and they serve over 3.3 million students. Southwest Texas Junior College participated in the Rural Community College Initiative privately funded by the Ford Foundation from 1995 to 2002. The investigator is documenting the two overarching objectives of the Rural Community College initiative to increase access to higher education and building regional economies.
Why is this study important or useful?
This knowledge is important and useful because of the lack of research aimed at the true impact and strength a community college possess to propel community out of poverty. The results of this study will help individuals throughout the education pipeline (state and local policy makers, college administrators, community activities, and students) better understand ways to help all their communities thrive.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?
You have been asked to be in this study because you are currently or have in the past taken a class or participated in a program originally developed by the Rural Community College Initiatives activities during SWTJC’s participation.

How many people will be in this study?
About 150 other people will be in this study.

What will I be asked to do in this study?
If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview consisting of about 10 questions.

How much time will I spend being this study?
The interview should take between 30-45 minutes depending on how much you chose to share.

Will being in this study cost me anything?
The only cost to you from this study is your time.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?
You will not be compensated for being in this study.

Can the investigator take me out of this study? (If appropriate for the topic)
N/A

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?
Risk should be minimal. The only perceived risks involve realizations from answering personal reflection questions.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?
You are providing great insight to future policy-makers and college administrators.

What are the benefits to science or society?
This study will help policy-makers and college administrators to better understand the relationship between education and poverty.

How will my privacy be protected?
I have secured a private meeting room to conduct interviews. However, you are free to decide where we will visit so we can talk without being overheard. Interview questions will ask you to introduce yourself and your program of study as well as discussing your future plans and your family/friends support structure. You are not required to answer any question that you determine is too uncomfortable.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**
As a student you will have the choice to use your name or a pseudonym. Interview recording will be kept in a small lockable fire proof safe. Once recording have been transcribed the recordings will be destroyed in accordance to recommendations set forth by the National Institute of Standards and Technology in their Special Publication 800-88, *Guidelines for Media Sanitization.*

Electronic transcription copies will be keep for three years and then destroyed in the manner described set forth by the National Institute of Standards and Technology in their Special Publication 800-88, Guidelines for Media Sanitization. Records of names matched to pseudonyms will be stored in a different physical location than the transcripts and in a small lockable fire proof safe to be destroyed three years after the study is published.

**What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?**
The alternative to being in this study is not to participate.

**What are my rights as a participant in this study?**
Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama or Southwest Texas Junior College.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board ("the IRB") is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

**Who do I call if I have questions or problems?**
If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study later on, please call the investigator Larry D. Mendez at 903-256-3443 or the faculty advisor Dr. Stephen Katsinas at 205-348-2470

If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email the Research Compliance office at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.
After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

I have read this consent form.
I have had a chance to ask questions.
I agree to take part in it.
I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.
I am 18 years of age or older.

______________________________  ______________________________
Signature of Research Participant  Date

______________________________  ______________________________
Signature of Investigator  Date

☐ I agree to have my interview audio recorded
☐ I DO NOT agree to have my interview audio recorded

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 2-17-16
EXPIRATION DATE: 2-16-17
Informed Consent for a Non-Medical Study

Study title: Did the Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative Produce Transformational Change? A Case Study of Southwest Texas Junior College.

Investigator's Larry D. Mendez, Doctoral Student, University of Alabama.

You are being asked to take part in a research study.

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Why have I been asked to be in this study?
You have been asked to be in this study because you are currently or have in the past been involved with academic or economic development activities originally developed by the Rural Community College Initiatives during SWTJC’s participation.

How many people will be in this study?
About 150 other people will be in this study.

What will I be asked to do in this study?
If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview consisting of about 10 questions.

How much time will I spend being this study?
The interview should take between 30-45 minutes depending on how much you chose to share.

Will being in this study cost me anything?
The only cost to you from this study is your time.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?
You will not be compensated for being in this study.

Can the investigator take me out of this study? (If appropriate for the topic)
N/A

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?
Risk should be minimal. The only perceived risks involve realizations from answering personal reflection questions.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?
You are providing great insight to future policy-makers and college administrators.

What are the benefits to science or society?
This study will help policy-makers and college administrators to better understand the relationship between education and poverty.

How will my privacy be protected?
I have secured a private meeting room to conduct interviews. However, you are free to decide where we will visit so we can talk without being overheard. Interview questions will ask you to introduce yourself and your community role as well as discussing your future plans and your family/friends support structure. You are not required to answer any question that you determine is too uncomfortable.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**
Interview recording will be kept in a small lockable fire proof safe. Once recording have been transcribed the recordings will be destroyed in accordance to recommendations set forth by the National Institute of Standards and Technology in their Special Publication 800-88, *Guidelines for Media Sanitization*.

Electronic transcription copies will be keep for three years and then destroyed in the manner described set forth by the National Institute of Standards and Technology in their Special Publication 800-88, *Guidelines for Media Sanitization*.

**What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?**
The alternative to being in this study is not to participate.

**What are my rights as a participant in this study?**
Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama or Southwest Texas Junior College.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (“the IRB”) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

**Who do I call if I have questions or problems?**
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After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a
copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

I have read this consent form.  
I have had a chance to ask questions.  
I agree to take part in it.  
I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.  
I am 18 years of age or older.

Signature of Research Participant _______________________________ Date __________

Signature of Investigator _______________________________ Date __________

☐ I agree to have my interview audio recorded

☐ I DO NOT agree to have my interview audio recorded

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 2-17-16
EXPIRATION DATE: 2-16-17
Appendix L

Protocol Application Form

**PROTOCOL APPLICATION FORM**
**FOR EXPEDITED REVIEW**
**HUMAN SUBJECTS IN NON-MEDICAL RESEARCH**
**UNIVERSITY**

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<tr>
<td>Larry Mendez</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>(903) 258 3443</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:lmen3553@gmail.com">lmen3553@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>Pregnant Women</td>
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<td>Employees</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (i.e., any population that is not specified above)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General Checklist**  
Yes/No

- Training Grant: N
- Program Project Grant?: N
- Cooperating Institution(s)?: N
- Federally Sponsored Project?: N
- Human blood, cells, tissues, or body fluids (tissues)?: N
- Subjects will be paid for participation?: N

**Study Location(s) Checklist**  
Yes/No

- University: Y
- GCRC: N
- University Hospital and Clinics: N
- Lucile Packard Children's Hospital: N
- VA (Specify PI at VA): N
- San Mateo County: N
- Other Category (Specify other study locations, including overseas): N

**VA Checklist**  
Yes/No

When human research activities meet the criteria to be considered VA Research, the IRB must be made aware in order to meet its obligations to protect human subjects. The research involves the use of the VAPAHCs nonpublic information to identify or contact human research subjects or prospective subjects or to use such data for research purposes, or The research is sponsored (i.e., funded) by the VAPAHCs, or The research is conducted by or under the direction of any employee or agent of VAPAHCs (full-time, part-time, intermittent, consultant, without compensation (WOC), on-station fee-basis, on-station contract, or on-station sharing agreement basis) in connection with her/his VAPAHCs responsibilities, or The research is conducted using any property or facility of VAPAHCs.

**Funding Checklist**

- Funding - Grants/Contracts
- Funding - Fellowships

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A protocol must be no more than minimal risk (i.e., "not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life") AND must only involve human subjects in one or more of the following paragraphs.

Select one or more of the following paragraphs:

1. N Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when condition (a) or (b) is met.
   a) Research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application (21 CFR Part 31, 32) is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review.)
   b) Research on medical devices for which
      i) an investigational device exemption application (21 CFR Part 812) is not required; or
      ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.

2. N Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows:
   i) from healthy, nonpregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds. For these subjects, the amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week; or
   ii) from other adults and children, considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.

3. N Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by non invasive means.

4. N Collection of data through non invasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing. (Studies intended to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the medical device are not generally eligible for expedited review, including studies of cleared medical devices for new indications.) Examples:
   i) physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy;
   ii) weighing or testing sensory acuity;
   iii) magnetic resonance imaging;
   iv) electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography;
   v) moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.

5. N Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical
treatment or diagnosis). (NOTE: Some research in this paragraph may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

6. N Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

7. Y Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

1. Purpose

a) Provide a 3-5 sentence lay summary of the purpose of the study.

The purpose of this historical organizational case study is to document the lasting institutional transformational change resulting from Southwest Texas Junior College's participation in the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). This study will examine and describe the context in which Southwest Texas Junior College attempted to achieve transformational change through its exposure to the Ford Foundation's RCCI. The RCCI was a combined programming effort of two divisions, the Rural Poverty and Resources Division, and the Education and Cultural Division.

b) What does the Investigator(s) hope to learn from the study?

It is hoped that this work will shed light on if and how the Ford Foundation-sponsored activities and initiatives became institutionalized over time.

1) What, if any, permanent/long-lasting changes resulting from SWTJC's participation in RCCI can be observed a decade after the program ended, related to

1a) In what ways did it impact the College's organization, administration, and finance?

1b) How did it change how the faculty execute their responsibilities?

1c) How did it change students at SWTJC?

1d) In what ways did it impact access to higher education and economic development?

2) What were MDC's methodological approaches to the design for change for participating RCCI institutions, and how did SWTJC practically apply these approaches?

3) What activities, if any, that the Rural Community College Initiative helped to initiate, were sustained in the decade after participation ended?

2. Study Procedures
Describe all study procedures.

This study will provide descriptions of the physical environment of southwest Texas, institutional characteristics of Southwest Texas Junior College, and an assessment as to the relative impact of SWTJC's participation in the RCCL. The study will begin by describing some key observations about the College and region prior to participation in the RCCL at the time of Katsinas' 1994-1995 site visits on behalf of the Ford Foundation. This is followed by describing the College immediately after its eight-year participation in the RCCL and whether or not the two primary goals of economic development and access to higher education were reached at SWTJC in 2003. This section is largely informed by Thomas's 2005 study. Next, is a description of the College a decade after its participation with the RCCL, to discuss what sustainable benefits, if any, can be observed from SWTJC's participation. Content analysis of primary and secondary sources including, but not limited to, Katsinas' original site notes, local news stories, MDC notes and publications, SWTJC meeting minutes, journal articles, numerous Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) websites, Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) website on Texas failed community college finances, and participant observation will be used.

The study will include extensive field work at Southwest Texas Junior College, but prior to the field work, will carefully analyze extensive reports, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) self-study data, grant narratives (particularly Title V and TRIO grants), and SWTJC's 2011 application for the Aspen Prize. This study follows the framework provided by the late Barton R. Clark in the appendix of his seminal 1960's work The Open Door College. Clark provides a book-length treatment of the evolution of San Jose Junior College in San Jose California. This study will follow the tell the story? approach provided by Clark to develop a picture of Southwest Texas Junior College prior to its involvement with the RCCL, following the institution to the point where the College is positioned a decade after the RCCL program has ended. Clark (1969) explains his approach in a detailed methodological note found in the appendix. "The research was almost entirely carried out by informal means - by unstructured interview and observation and the perusal of documents (p.180)" Hence the study relied almost completely on informal methods. The informal procedures permitted intensive work with selected sources. To ask about the determinants of a particular policy, it is more promising to go to the five persons likely to know than to the fifty that do not know (p. 181) While formal techniques can contribute to this quest in organizational studies of the level and type represented here, they can hardly be relied upon as the sole or perhaps even the major source of significant information. (Clark, 1960, p. 182)

Clark's case study approach was also deployed by Thomas in his 2003 study of SWTJC. This author's research methodology will rely on content analysis for both primary and secondary sources that will not require multiple trips to SWTJC. Gaining access to many of those resources is exponentially more readily available during the second decade of the 2000's with the advent of the Internet. After extensive document analysis, the researcher will visit SWTJC in order to conduct in-depth interviews as well as executing participant observations. Just as Clark in his study
was exploring
the evolution of San Jose Junior College, my work will explore the
evolution of SWTJC during and especially after its participation in
the RCCI initiative.

It is hoped that this work will shed light on if and how the Ford
Foundation-sponsored activities and initiatives became institutionalized over time.

b) State if audio or video taping will occur. Describe what will become of the tapes after use, e.g., shown
at scientific meetings, erased. Describe the final disposition of the tapes.

Audio recording will occur to aid researcher in the accuracy of
field notes. Audio recording will be transcribed within 60 days of
initial recording. Audio recordings will be retained on an encrypted
storage device and locked in a two-drawer file cabinet for period
not to exceed 1-year. Destruction of audio recording will follow
established by the National Institute of Standards and Technology in
their special publication 800-85, "Guidelines for Media
Sanitization."

c) State if deception will be used. If so, provide rationale and describe debriefing procedures. Submit a
debriefing script in Section #11 (Attachments).

No deception will be used.

3. Background

a) Describe past findings leading to the formulation of the study.

This is an important study: The last major rural community college
program was the Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative.

There are important lessons that likely will be gleaned from
reconsidering how RCCI changed Southwest Texas Junior College, and
it is indeed rare that an unbiased retrospective examination of
any foundation-funded program occurs over a decade after the
program runs out, to see what really was sustained.
This study builds upon the initial 2003 study by Christopher J.
Thomas at the University of North Texas "Southwest Texas Junior
College: Transformation on the Border." Thomas concluded that the
participation in the RCCI significantly changed Southwest Texas
Junior College and this transformation was observable in many facets
of its organization. However, economic development impact was too
early to determine in 2002 as the program ended and Thomas's visits
through 2004. IPED's data for 2012-2013 will provide another look at
SWTJC a decade after the RCCI program ended as well as greater
attention focused on economic development results.

4. Subject Population

a) State how many subjects will be involved and describe the type of subjects (e.g., students, patients with
cardiac problems, particular kind of cancer, etc.) and state the reason for using such subjects.

Adult students attending Southwest Texas Junior College in specific programs created by the involvement of
the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) funded by the Ford Foundation (1996-2002).

Southwest Texas Junior College's administrative leadership and faculty because the Ford Foundation through
the RCCI was to think "regional" in their strategy.

Chamber of Commerce Directors and Regional Economic Development Personnel because these are the very
groups targeted by the Ford Foundation.

b) State the age range, gender, and ethnic background.

Age Range = ONLY ADULTS
Gender and Ethnic Background = This study does not focus on a particular gender or ethnic background due to the broad range of the study.

c) State the number and rationale for involvement of potentially vulnerable subjects to be entered into the study, including minors, pregnant women, economically and educationally disadvantaged, decisionally impaired, and homeless people. Specify the measures being taken to minimize the risks and the chance of harm to the potentially vulnerable subjects.

NA

d) If women, minorities, or minors are not included, a clear compelling rationale must be provided.

NA

e) State the number, if any, of subjects who are laboratory personnel, employees, and/or students. They should render the same written informed consent. If compensation is allowed, they should also receive it. (Please see University policy at http://www.keyusa.com/IRB.htm).

NA

f) Describe how potential subjects will be identified for recruitment (e.g., chart review, referral from individual's treating physician, those individuals answering an ad). Describe how subjects will be recruited and how they will initially learn about the research, e.g., clinics, advertising (attach recruitment materials in Section #11 (Attachments)). You may not contact potential subjects prior to IRB approval.

Students will be identified based on specific degree program and subsequent class that were created as a result of SWTJC’s participation in the RCCI. Students can remain anonymous by means of a pseudo name and that option would be a part of the informed consent form.

Faculty will be treated in the same manner as students (see above)

Administrators, community members and business leaders interviews must be on the record with details laid out in the informed consent form.

g) Describe your recruitment procedures. Attach advertisements, flyers, etc., in Section #11 (Attachments).

Intent is to send an email introduction to the executive leaders of each stakeholder groups providing an informed consent form to explain the study and begin to establish meeting spaces and timelines.

h) Payment. Explain the amount and schedule of payment, if any, that will be paid for participation in the study. Include provisions for prorating payment.

NA

i) Estimate the probable duration of the entire study as well as an estimate of the total time each subject is to be involved and data about the subject is to be collected (e.g., This is a 2 year study).

This study covers a twenty year time period. Each interview or focus group is estimated to take about 1 hour. These interviews will conclude 5 years worth of my research.

5. Risks

HHS Regulations define a subject at risk as follows: "...any individual who may be exposed to the possibility of injury, including physical, psychological, or social injury, as a consequence of participation as a subject in any research, development, related activity which departs from the application of those accepted methods necessary to meet his needs, or which increases the ordinary risks of daily life, including the recognized risks inherent in a chosen occupation or field of service."

If audio/video taping will be used, state if it could increase potential risk to subject’s confidentiality.

a) For the following categories, include an estimate of the potential risk.

- Physical well-being.

NA
- Psychological well-being.
  The only perceived risks involve realizations from answering personal reflection questions.

- Political well-being.
  NA

- Economic well-being.
  NA

- Social well-being.
  NA

b) In case of overseas research, describe qualifications/preparations that enable you to estimate and minimize risks to subjects.
  NA

c) Discuss plans for ensuring necessary medical or professional intervention in the event of a distressed subject.
  NA

6. Benefits

a) Describe the potential benefit(s) to be gained by the subjects or by the acquisition of important knowledge which may benefit future subjects, etc.

Benefits to individuals involved are minimal. The benefits are more designed to enhance knowledge in Community College sector.

This is the first study ever of a rural community college that has a twenty year perspective. There are 600 community colleges in the United States, and they serve over 3.3 million students. This makes this highly understudied group of critical importance. It is important to note that this was the only private foundation funded national demonstration for community colleges. There has been no other since the RCCI concluded in 2002. Lessons learned by participating and their results required research and reporting.

7. Procedures to Maintain Confidentiality

a) Describe procedures protecting the privacy of the subjects and for maintaining confidentiality of data, as required by federal regulations, if applicable.

I have secured a private meeting room to conduct interviews. However, subjects are free to decide where we will visit so we can talk without being overheard.

A student you will have the choice to use real name or a pseudonym. Interview recording will be kept in a small lockable fireproof safe. Once recording have been transcribed the recordings will be destroyed in accordance to recommendations set forth by the National Institute of Standards and Technology in their Special Publication 800-88, Guidelines for Media Sanitization.

Electronic transcription copies will be kept for three years and then destroyed in the manner described above. Records of names matched to pseudonyms will be stored in a different physical location than the transcripts and in a small lockable fireproof safe to be destroyed three years after the study is published.
This study will be made public and will have no meaning if done confidentially. Only student population will be given the opportunity to remain anonymous by means of pseudo names. Informed consent form indicates the same. Participation in the study is not mandated and is on a volunteer basis.

b) If information derived from the study will be provided to the subject's personal physician, a government agency, or any other person or group, describe to whom the information will be given and the nature of the information.

NO

c) Specify where and under what conditions study data will be kept, how samples will be labeled, who has access to data, and what will be available to whom.

Interview recording will be kept in a small lockable fire proof safe. Once recording has been transcribed the recordings will be destroyed in accordance to recommendations set forth by the National Institute of Standards and Technology in their Special Publication 800-88, Guidelines for Media Sanitization.

Electronic transcription copies will be kept for three years and then destroyed in the manner described above. Records of names matched to pseudonyms will be stored in a different physical location than the transcripts and in a small lockable fire proof safe to be destroyed three years after the study is published.

Access to these electronic data records are reduced to the research and dissertation committee.

8. Potential Conflict of Interest

Please answer the following questions a through f:

a) N Do any of the involved investigators or their immediate family (as described below) have consulting arrangements, management responsibilities or equity holdings in the Sponsoring company, vendor(s), provider(s) of goods, or subcontractor(s)?

b) N Do any investigators or their immediate family have any financial relationship with the Sponsoring company, including the receipt of honoraria, income, or stock/stock options as payment?

c) N Is any investigator(s) a member of an advisory board with the Sponsoring company?

d) N Do any investigators receive gift funds from the Sponsoring company?

e) N Do any investigators or their immediate family have an ownership or royalty interest in any intellectual property utilized in this protocol?

f) N Does University have an ownership or royalty interest in any intellectual property utilized in this protocol?

"Immediate family" means a spouse, dependent children as defined by the IRS, or a domestic partner.

If one or more of the above relationships exist, please include a statement in the consent form to disclose this relationship, i.e., a paid consultant, a paid member of the Scientific Advisory Board, has stock or stock options, or receives payment for lectures given on behalf of the sponsor (see sample consent form). The consent form should disclose what institution(s) or companies are involved in the study through funding, cooperative research, or by providing study drugs or equipment (see sample consent form).

If you answer yes to any of the questions above, you must file a Col disclosure with your School Dean. If you are a faculty member in the School of Medicine, contact Barbara Flynn @ 723-7226, or emailprotocol@keyusa.com. http://www.keyusa.com/IRB.htm.

9. Consent Background
You can add different Consent Forms, Alteration Forms, and Waivers. Provide consent process background information, in the table below, for each Consent Form(s), Alteration Form(s), and Waiver(s).

9.1 Consent Form

informed consent swtje mendez

Who is obtaining consent? The person obtaining consent must be knowledgeable about the study.

Larry Mendez - Primary Investigator

How is consent being obtained?

Signed form.

What steps are you taking to determine that potential subjects are competent to participate in the decision-making process?

All stakeholders are either students attending institutions of higher education or they hold leadership positions at the College or within their respective communities.

10. Assent Background

All minors must provide an affirmative consent to participating by signing a simplified assent form, unless the Investigator(s) provides evidence to the IRB that the minors are not capable of assenting because of age, maturity, psychological state, or other factors.

16. Attachments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>Document Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Mendez-Question Protocol for IRB</td>
<td>12/18/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Memorandum-SWTJC-Visit-Publishable</td>
<td>12/18/2015</td>
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Obligations

Any change in the research protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to the implementation of such change. Any complications in subjects or evidence of increase in the original estimate of risk should be reported at once to the IRB before continuing with the project. Inasmuch as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) include faculty, staff, legal counsel, public members, and students, protocols should be written in language that can be understood by all Panel members. The investigators must inform the participants of any significant new knowledge obtained during the course of the research.

All continuing projects and activities must be reviewed and re-approved at least annually by the IRB. IRB approval of any project is for a maximum period of one year. It is the responsibility of the Investigator(s) to resubmit the project to the IRB for annual review prior to the end of that year. (A "RENEWAL" form [notice to renew protocol) is sent to the Principal Investigator 7 weeks prior to the expiration date of the protocol.)

Department Chair must approve faculty and staff research that is not part of a sponsored project. VA applicants must have Division Chief or Ward Supervisor approval. E-mail the Department Chair approval to eprotocol@keyusa.com.

All data including all signed consent form documents must be retained for a minimum of three years past the completion of the research. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. (Policy on Retention of and Access to Research Data, Research Policy Handbook, http://www.keyusa.com/IRB.htm)