Retention and Recruitment in Engineering at UTPA

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Abstract

The University of Texas Pan American (UTPA) is located in a unique point where the cultural merge of two nations, United States and México, occurred. The main campus of the University is in Edinburg, Texas, 15 miles from the U.S./Mexico border and 75 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. The total service population is two million approximately.

The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education lists UTPA among its top 100 best U.S. colleges for Hispanics. UTPA enrolls the highest number and highest percentage of Hispanics (86%) among Texas public universities. UTPA is the 10th largest university in the state and the fifth largest in the UT System.

Retention and recruitment are important tools in solving both university enrollment levels and supplying industry with capable professionals. These activities are very important and it is never too early to start promoting them in our community; among parents, students, teachers, counselors and others who participate in the development of our future leaders.

Economics, politics, perception of university, placement service, course availability, faculty, facilities, financial assistance, student's desires, and social climate are common factors impacting recruitment and retention among the young students and their parents.

The School of Engineering at UTPA has benefit from multiple efforts to prepare and retain students. This study is an overview of several strategies like an integrated K-12, undergraduate and graduate programs and their key components.

The study is organized in two sections, the first on recruitment and the second on retention. Implementation mechanisms are sketched out rather than elaborated and the programs highlighted are GEAR UP, Talent Search, HESTEC, Mentoring and Learning Communities (MLC) Program, Leadership Program, and Bridge Program.

Impact of the common factors are described, data is presented to assess the effectiveness of several of the academic support and retention programs covered in this study. Finally, the role of engineering faculty involvement and collaboration with local schools and colleges is addressed.