Food Safety & Agroterrorism Training: Educating Our Future Workforce

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Collaborative Partners

- Laredo Community College
- Palo Alto College
- Northwest Vista College
- Texas State University
Funding Amount and Duration

- Year 1 - $800,000
- Year 2 - $862,000
- Year 3 - $825,000
- Year 4 - $840,000
- Year 4 Supplement (Costa Rica) - $60,926

TOTAL: $ 3.39 million
Project Justification

- September 11, 2001 terrorists attacks

- Much attention by the USDA and Texas Department of Agriculture has been put on agroterrorism and the safety of our food supply (House Research Organization, 2001).
  - Agroterrorism is a subset of bioterrorism, and is defined as the deliberate introduction of an animal or plant disease with the goal of generating fear, causing economic losses, and/or undermining social stability (CRS Report for Congress, 2007)

- Animal Health and Plant Inspection Station (APHIS), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.
Project Justification (cont.)

- Not only can agroterrorism harm our food supply and well-being, it can devastate the Texas and U.S. economy (Levin, 2005).

- With this concern, many jobs are available to our students who are trained in this specific area
  - Many Hispanic students perceive agriculture as work done by migrant workers or taking care of livestock.
Project Justification (cont.)

- Mr. Billy Dictson, Director of the Southwest Border Food Safety and Defense Center in Las Cruces, NM.

- Course entitled "Preparedness and Response to Food and Agriculture Incidents: Management and Planning Level"

- Department of Homeland Security
Project Objectives

- Encourage Hispanic community college students to develop early linkages with Texas State University through the newly established University Transfer Centers, mentorship websites, summer camps, faculty networking, and experiential learning fieldtrips and have a retention rate at or higher than that of the University.

- Develop early linkages and a strong pipeline for K-12 students by visiting 10 schools a year with a high representation of Hispanic students. Discussion and activities regarding USDA employment will be presented.

- Train and certify scholar Hispanic students in the course entitled “Preparedness and Response to Food and Agriculture Incidents: Management and Planning Level”
Project Objectives (cont.)

- Retain and place 90 percent of the student participants in job shadowing and internship opportunities within USDA agencies.

- Fund and graduate 50 Hispanic students who are well trained and ready to enter employment in the food safety / inspection areas with APHIS, FSIS, or another USDA agency.

- Form “Academic Research Clusters” (directed by faculty and graduate students) to create a mentoring component and allow Hispanic students to collect data and present their findings at research conferences.
Recruitment

- Recruitment of outstanding Hispanic scholars from Laredo Community College, Palo Alto College, Northwest Vista College, and TxState

- Formation of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) organization.
Student Population

- Laredo Community College
  - 21 undergraduate students

- Northwest Vista College
  - 5 undergraduate students

- Palo Alto College
  - 3 undergraduate students

- Texas State University
  - 15 undergraduate students
  - 6 graduate students
Educational Expenses Covered

- Community College students
  - $2,500 per semester

- Texas State University students
  - $4,000 per semester undergraduate student
  - $14,400 per year graduate student

- IPad issued to every student.
On-Campus Agroterrorism Training

- Students participated in a one week summer camp on Texas State University campus.

- Trained in the agroterrorism course “Preparedness and Response to Food and Agriculture Incidents: Management and Planning Level”

- Experiential learning activities offered (guest lectures from Department faculty, field trip to Freeman Ranch, tours of campus, guest speakers from APHIS, FSIS, NRCS, FS, Texas Department of Agriculture, etc.)

- Housed in University dorms, ate in dining halls, and explored the college atmosphere.
Travelling Classroom

- One week trip to Las Cruces, NM to visit the Southwest Border Food Safety and Defense Center.

- Instructor Bios (18):
  - Veterinarians
  - Food Safety Consultants
  - Dairy owners
  - Plant pathologists
  - Agriculture inspectors
Travelling Classroom (cont.)

- Students visited:
  - Western Dairy Transportation
  - United States/Mexico Livestock Border Crossing
  - “Dairy Row”
  - Challenges facing the food production industry
  - Cheese processing plant
  - Bovine necropsy procedures
  - Spices and specialty food processing facility
Job Shadowing and Internships

- To date, the project has provided and helped fund over 35 paid USDA summer internships and 20 other life science internships.

- **Agriculture Research Service**
  - Beltsville, MD, Edinburg, TX
  - Kerrville, TX, Puerto Rico

- **Forest Service**
  - Aspen, CO, Ruidoso, NM
  - Bozeman, MT, Missoula, MT
  - Grand Junction, CO, Laramie, WY

- **Natural Resource Conservation Service**
  - San Marcos, TX, Michigan
International Experiences

- 20 students will be travelling to Costa Rica for 14 days in June 2015.
  
  - Sustainable agriculture tours
    - Earth University
    - Texas A&M University Soltis Center
Graduation

- Ninety percent of the students that have started the project are still retained in the program and at the University. (Most that have dropped have done so because of health or moving).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Number of Students with Degrees</th>
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<td>December 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2014</td>
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<td>Summer 2015</td>
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<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2016</td>
<td>10</td>
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*75.5% of the students will graduate in 4 years.
*97.8% of the students will graduate in 4.5 years