



OVERVIEW: As the economy improves, it is becoming increasingly important that Alamo Colleges deploy new ways to train San Antonio's diverse workforce for high-growth and high-demand occupations. The Board and Chancellor of Alamo Colleges have called for an assertive and transformational agenda to expand and build strategic innovations that will increase the transfer rate of adult basic and lower-level developmental education students into college credit programs.

Alamo Colleges has launched a multi-year system enhancement initiative that aims to ensure that the five-college system can deliver on its mission to empower San Antonio's diverse communities for success. Workbased English Solutions, a department in the Economic and Workforce Development Division, leads the implementation this innovative initiative that will deliver technical training in high-demand and emerging industries to workers whose basic skills or limited English inhibit their access to higher education and training.

The Alamo I-BEST Initiative provides training and employment assistance to workers and students who require basic skill development in order to succeed in technical training. I-BEST students benefit from technical training that is aligned with reading, writing, math or language skills needed for the job. Individuals eligible to participate in this program include developmental and adult basic education students, individuals with limited English, military veterans and spouses, high school dropouts and others.

GOAL: The goal of the initiative is to develop sustainable models at the Alamo Colleges that deliver under-skilled students with training and education in high demand occupations.

THE CHALLENGE: For San Antonio to remain a prosperous city, attracting new companies and raising household incomes, it must ensure that its current and future workforce remains well-educated. The city's Hispanic population is significantly larger than that of Dallas, Houston or Austin,¹ and Hispanic representation in workforce training programs is forecasted to increase from just under 55% to 75% by 2040.² In Texas, this growing segment of the workforce has the highest drop-out rates, lowest educational attainment rates and largest percentage of limited English proficiency. Within the Alamo Colleges the majority of students in developmental education are Hispanic (56%) and research points to dismal degree completion rates among Hispanics and low-income students. The city requires a higher education solution.



LEGACY MODEL REDESIGN: Students requiring basic skills or English development often face a one-size-fits-all approach in community college assessment and training models. Workbased English Solutions' training and services are customized for these students, utilizing researched and community-tested models.

COMMUNITY ACCESS: To better engage communities that may not see college and training as a viable "option," Alamo Colleges leverages the high recognition and "community currency" that collaborating organizations have to recruit and provide program support services to populations that often face challenges accessing higher education, such as veterans, high school drop-outs, and students with limited English. The initiative is based at the Westside Education and Training Center (WETC), an emerging center of excellence designed to provide college access for low-income and immigrant customers on San Antonio's culturally vibrant, yet economically depressed, Westside. Training will occur at WETC as well as at the Alamo Colleges main campuses.

ASSESSMENT INNOVATION: Rather than traditional computer-based admissions testing, Workbased English Solutions uses a comprehensive assessment protocol that results in a quantitative and qualitative profile of knowledge, abilities, career goals and support needs. The process recognizes, legitimizes and incorporates the significant learning and work experience of many students and includes tests normed on adult basic education populations, including Spanish language assessments. This assessment process includes a review

¹ US Census Bureau 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

² Murdock, S. (2003). The New Texas Challenge.

of job interests, career awareness, knowledge of the work environment and a determination of outside support needs. The result is a robust body of evidence that allows students and staff to collaborate in making informed decisions about placement, employment interest and needed support services to ensure retention and employment success.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES: Funding from the U.S Department of Labor and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has allowed Alamo Colleges to deliver an initiative in collaboration with a broad alliance of diverse workforce development organizations that will deliver recruitment, support services, basic education, technical training and employment assistance.

CAREER EASE: Following assessment, students enter a short-term, industry-specific Career Exploratory and Skill Enhancement (**Career EASE**) course. This courses provides cluster-specific basic skills or English language development as well as information related the industry, employer expectations, and work environment. The intent of the course is to begin basic skills development for students while providing students with information that will assist them in being informed consumers of training services and make strong decisions about the best technical training options.

I-BEST Model: Legacy instructional sequences have proven to not work for lower skilled students. Few navigate the lengthy sequence of basic education to enter standard community college training programs. To address these challenges, Alamo Colleges is

implementing the I-BEST model (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) tested over several years in the Washington State college system. I-BEST pairs Developmental Education and professional-technical instructors in the classroom to concurrently advance student gains in basic and professional-technical skills. This model is designed to more rapidly progress students through certificate training with industry certification and credits that apply to A.A.S degrees.

Specific Services to Internationally Trained Health Workers: One of the segments of the workforce most left behind are professionals who have been trained outside the U.S. but who require English as a Second Language and other specific services to reenter their fields of study. As part of this initiative, Workbased English Solutions is aligning specialized services for internationally trained health professionals through its Welcome Back Center. This resource *welcomes* internationally trained health professionals living in the San Antonio area *back* into the healthcare industry through customized employment and training services. The model is proven in eight locations across the country.³ These highly-skilled professionals can assist Health Services organizations in attending to the need for linguistically and culturally competent workers.

For more information on I-BEST initiative, contact Anson Green or Carrie Tupa.

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Alliances	Target Customer	Role
Alamo Area Council of Governments	One-stop center customers	Healthcare consortium, rural areas one-stop services
American GI Forum	Veterans and spouses of veterans	Recruitment, support and employment placement assistance
Alamo Area Welcome Back Center (Alamo Colleges)	Foreign trained healthcare workers	Workforce intermediary
Mission Verde Center Consortium	Businesses, agencies and organizations focused on sustainability	Interface with business, city government, public utilities schools and universities
Project QUEST	Low-income students	Workforce intermediary
Region 20 Educational Service Center, Seguin & San Antonio Independent School District	Adult education students	ABE services integrated with technical training, professional development
San Antonio Youth Centers	High school drop outs	Recruitment, support and employment placement assistance
Workforce Solutions Alamo	One-stop center customers	Urban one-stop services



³ For more information on the Welcome Back Center, see <http://welcomebackinitiative.org/sf/>.