

Annual Report
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
NSF IUSE HSI Project

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by



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Overview

In Fall 2018, the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) launched the *Building Capacity: Transforming Undergraduate Education in STEM Through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Community Engagement* project with funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) through the Improving Undergraduate STEM Education (IUSE) Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) Program. The five year project aims to improve student retention and graduation rates in the College of Sciences (COS) by implementing culturally and linguistically relevant gateway courses in mathematics and biology and engaging students in meaningful community projects, which will reach approximately 5000 students. In Spring 2019, the project began delivering faculty workshops to develop knowledge and skills in inclusive, culturally relevant teaching and experiential learning. Community members joined in the workshops. To examine the effectiveness of the project, educational researchers began studying the impacts of the bilingual courses on student learning and attitudes also in the spring. In the last few years, the project plans to hold conferences to communicate findings and exchange knowledge with colleagues at other institutions.

This report presents the groundwork laid for the evaluation of the project. It also addresses some of the evaluation questions by assessing preliminary data gathered in the Spring of 2019 and focuses on the faculty workshops. It makes evaluative judgments of the findings as well as discusses implications.

Evaluation

As planned, the purpose of the evaluation is both formative and summative. As a formative evaluation, it provides ongoing feedback about strategies, processes, and outcomes that project staff can use to reflect on where the project is functioning well and where it is not. Project staff can use findings about project activities and outcomes to make refinements and improve its effectiveness. In the final year, the evaluation will be mostly summative and offer judgments about overall project performance to make plans for future implementation of the activities.

Between the fall and winter, the evaluator determined that the early phase of the project was highly suited for developmental evaluation and some of its tools because it is an innovation under construction in a complex system (Patton, 2011). For example, the project leadership was designing the content and activities of the faculty workshops in response to the needs of faculty that the team perceived, such as visits to sites in the community where partnerships were or could be forged. In a meeting in October 2018 that the evaluator facilitated, the project leadership discussed what instruction in the bilingual college classes looks like: Students respond to questions in English or in Spanish; semester projects are in English or Spanish; faculty members encourage students to use

references that are in Spanish. To the evaluator, it was clear that this project was unfolding in a complex environment with faculty members who have a range of experiences from little knowledge of Spanish-language and Hispanic culture to bilingual professors who themselves, like many UTRGV students, have experienced pressure to suppress their skills in Spanish speaking and knowledge of their culture in the US educational system. The project sits in a complex system of the culture of the Rio Grande Valley, the University itself, and the context of academia in US culture.

With agreement from the PI and project coordinator, the evaluator decided that an adaptive evaluation structure would be appropriate in the beginning to include gathering data and providing feedback quickly as the project designed and piloted the workshops and studying the complexity of the context in which the innovations rolled out. In March, the evaluator shared the first report brief with project staff about faculty attitudes and experiences of the first community engagement workshop. In April, after observing and subsequent community engagement workshop, the second report brief examined how the project responded to faculty attitudes and experiences revealed in the first brief. This report goes in more depth than did the report briefs and expands on the findings.

Evaluation Questions

This evaluation addresses the first two of the five following questions. The project and the evaluation are in the developmental and formative phases, so the data gathered pertains to project processes, but not outcomes. The other questions will be addressed after the project has had time to solidify.

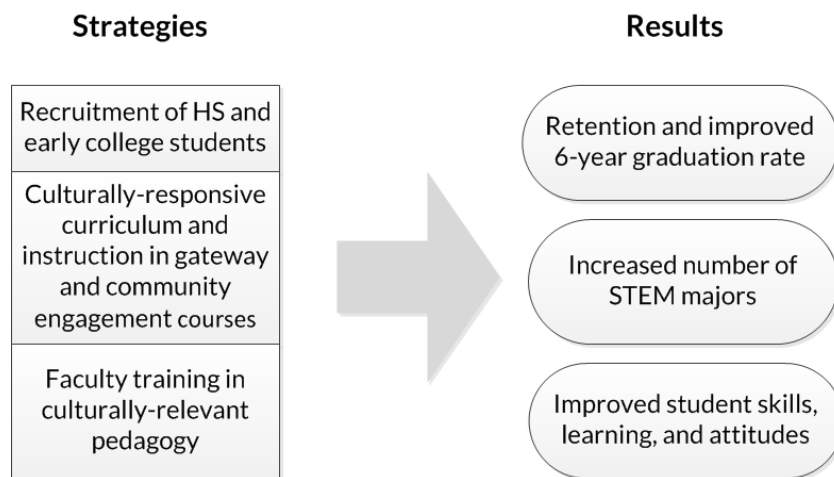
1. How well does the design of the project fit with the needs of the UTRGV and local community?
2. What is the quality of design and implementation of the project?
3. What is the value of the project to students, faculty, UTRGV administrators, and community?
4. What barriers and enablers make a difference in successful/disappointing implementation and outcomes?
5. Was it worth implementing, and is it worth continuing to support?

Methodology

The evaluation launched in October of 2019 when the evaluator visited the UTRGV Edinburg campus. The evaluator facilitated a meeting of a group of stakeholders, including the PI, Co-PIs, the Project Coordinator, two graduate students, and at least one other stakeholder. The task was to develop an evaluation rubric to determine criteria, or standards, that the evaluator will compare to the evidence gathered about the project through interviews, surveys, observations, and so on. First, the group discussed and agreed upon a program theory (Figure 1). Next, the stakeholders answered

two questions: (a) What should the project outcomes look like when the project is complete, five years from now? and (b) What do you envision happening to get there? A rich discussion ensued, which was documented on poster paper and with audio-recording for accuracy. The evaluator transcribed, categorized, and organized the responses as criteria for evaluating project activities and outcomes. The PI, three Co-PIs, the Project Coordinator, a student assistant, and the evaluator met to review and revise the rubric (see Tables 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Theory of Change



The evaluation rubric will be used to make judgments about the evidence gathered. Table 1 presents the criteria as persons involved and dimensions used to evaluate project processes grouped by project strategies. Table 2 presents the criteria in the same way for evaluating outcomes.

Table 1. Evaluation Criteria for Processes

Recruitment of high school and early college students	
Students & families	It is evident that Spanish-language students & families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> feel comfortable when they engage with the academic context, feel welcomed by advertising & communication meant to recruit them
Faculty	It is evident that faculty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicate what classes will be like to students & family members and benefits to high schoolers and early college students of attending UTRGV, rather than attending community college

Culturally-responsive curriculum and instruction in gateway & community engagement courses	
Students	<p>It is evident that students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage in courses by drawing on native culture and language, that is, with bicultural and bilingual skills as assets; feel comfortable communicating in English or in Spanish for community engagement courses, engage in equal exchange with local community (i.e., start exchange at the beginning of class) and explore beliefs & attitudes that correspond to I-we language communicate with each other at a high level about the subject matter; engage in active learning; feel they have control over their own learning
Faculty	<p>It is evident that faculty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> feel comfortable engaging in courses and in academic setting more broadly by drawing on native culture and language, that is, with bicultural and bilingual skills as assets have CESL certification for community engagement courses; reciprocity and equally exchanged information between local and university community (i.e., ideally established from the beginning of class, adoption of I-we language)
Faculty workshop in culturally-relevant pedagogy	
Faculty	<p>It is evident that faculty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attend workshops engage in respectful, open-minded dialogue; get exposed to students' language, culture, life history as immigrants; look into their own implicit biases and explore student language and "cultural capital" as assets, not deficiencies; confront racism and micro-aggressions through diversity training explore new ways of teaching and learning; experience challenges to the way they traditionally teach students (e.g., discuss why language is important)
University administration	<p>It is evident that administrators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> support the development of a certificate program for faculty who demonstrate competence in culturally-relevant pedagogy

Table 2. Evaluation Criteria for Outcomes

Recruitment of high school and early college students	
Students	<p>It is evident that students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> high school and early college students enroll in The College of Sciences at UTRGV and in bilingual/bicultural biology and math courses

Culturally-responsive curriculum and instruction in gateway & community engagement courses	
Students	<p>It is evident that students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are more integrated into the institution than before, that is, they feel a sense of belonging as college students; have faculty mentors; have positive interaction with faculty who value their language and culture; adopt attitudes and values pertaining to acceptance of Spanish as an academic language and their own bicultural identity • demonstrate social responsibility • feel proud and strong about STEM and about their bilingual and bicultural skills as assets
Faculty	<p>It is evident that faculty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate social responsibility • adopt values and practices of culturally relevant pedagogy: including high academic expectations for students; use students' culture as a vehicle for learning; & facilitate students' development of a sociopolitical consciousness to critique cultural norms, values, & mores (Ladson-Billings, 1995a & 1995b) • adopt values and attitudes that demonstrate acceptance of Spanish as an academic language and students' bicultural identity as well as their own biculturalism, if that is the case, and have positive interaction with students
University	<p>It is evident that University administrators and staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a commitment to student development and success, including finishing degrees in 4 to 6 years • adopt values and attitudes in the policies and practices that demonstrate acceptance of Spanish as an academic language and students' bicultural identity • institute a certificate in Spanish biology and math; institutionalize CESL • perhaps, other departments see the impact and utility of changes in the College of Sciences at UTRGV
Faculty workshop in culturally-relevant pedagogy	
Faculty	<p>It is evident that faculty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 participate in workshops • are well-prepared, comfortable in culturally relevant pedagogy (curriculum and instruction); value students' "cultural capital," that is, language, culture, life history as immigrants (including bilingualism, misconceptions revealed); have changed ways of thinking about instruction and learning; are culturally competent (see second bullet for faculty under "Culturally-responsive curriculum and instruction in gateway & community engagement courses") • adopt a curriculum that is more relevant to culture of students, families, and community than before; implement tools gained in the workshops in ways that show sensitivity to students who are non-native speakers • faculty who are non-native English speakers hold and communicate beliefs that demonstrate cultural competence, such as students' native language and culture is an asset

Data Synthesis

The synthesis methodology enables evaluators to “draw overall evaluative conclusions from multiple findings about a single evaluand” (Davidson, 2005). The rating scale, adapted from Oakden (2011), is presented in Table 3. To draw evaluative conclusions, each data source, both quantitative and qualitative, will be summarized and then compared to the evaluation criteria, and judged and rated on the continuum “poor” to “excellent.”

Table 3. Scale for Determining Merit of Evidence

Levels	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
Excellent (always)	Clear example of exemplary performance or practice: no weaknesses	90% or more agree with statements; strong, cohesive view, no dissent
Very good (almost always)	Very good to excellent performance on virtually all aspects; strong overall, but not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real consequence	80%-90% agree with statement, no dissent
Good (mostly, with some exceptions)	Reasonably good performance overall; might have a few slight weaknesses but nothing serious.	60%-80% agree with statement and no more than 15% dissent, but on key aspects
Adequate (sometimes with quite a few exceptions)	Fair performance, some serious, but nonfatal weaknesses in a few aspects	40%-60% agree with, and no more than 16% dissent, but no showstoppers
Inadequate (barely or not at all)	No clear evidence has yet emerged that the aspect of performance has taken effect	Less than 40% or more agree, but no serious dissent or showstoppers
Poor (never or occasionally with clear weakness)	Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board on crucial aspects	Less than 40% or more agree and some serious dissent or showstoppers

Context of Project

UTRGV is located in the lower Rio Grande Valley where about 90% of the people are Hispanic and unemployment and poverty rates are high. The University has some residential halls, but most of the students are commuters. The four- and six-year graduation rates are around 20% and 40% respectively (see grant proposal). It is a border community where international culture, language, and commercial exchange are a way of life.

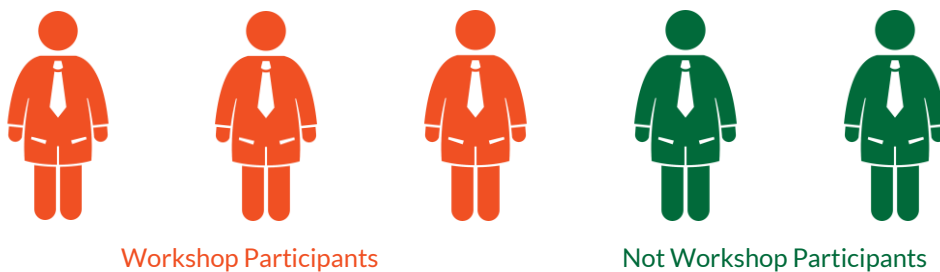
Data Collected

The evaluator collected data in the Spring of 2019 to address the first three evaluation questions and to provide timely findings in areas in which project leaders expressed interest. The evaluator suggested the method of a case study to examine the complexity of the personal and professional

growth envisioned for faculty members who participated in the workshops and eventually and ideally will implement culturally relevant courses with students focused on community engagement. The growth expected would take place in a set of nested systems comprised of the University, colleges within UTRGV, surrounding community, and college classrooms. Faculty members have distinct personal preparedness and proclivity for implementing culturally relevant pedagogy: Some have similar immigrant histories to many UTRGV students; some benefit from white privilege in mainstream US culture; and some are foreign-born and not from Hispanic countries. The case study method allows the researcher to examine an integrated system and understand the object of study in depth, here the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors of faculty members who design and implement the courses (Stake, 1995). As for other comprehensive qualitative research methods, the results of case studies provide in-depth knowledge about the uniqueness and complexity of a specific social phenomena and a specific context and are not necessarily generalizable to other contexts.

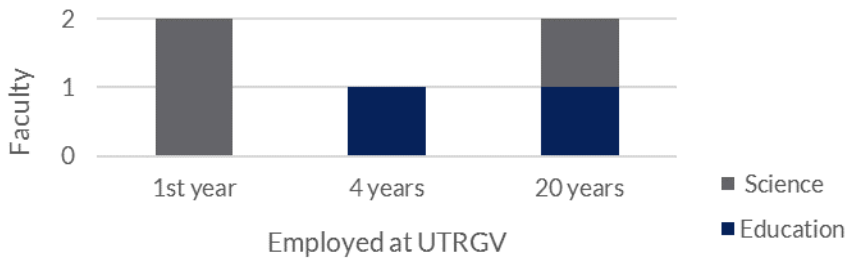
Through the case study method, in collaboration with the PI, the evaluator decided to follow five faculty members and to assess their needs, attitudes, and experiences regarding the faculty workshops and their plans for delivering community engagement courses. The sample included three faculty members who participated in the first workshop and two who had applied to participate, but were not invited. The purpose of selecting faculty with these two experiences was to compare and contrast the professional growth in the areas of interest for those who experienced the “treatment” and those who did not. The project leadership team decided to select faculty members who already had relationships with a community partner and to limit the number of faculty members to 12, despite a large applicant pool, to maintain an intimate context for personal and professional development. Figure 2 presents the color-coding in this report for faculty members who participated in workshops and those who did not participate. Demographic characteristics of the five are presented in Figure 3. In this report, the presentation of quotations and details from the interviews omits identifying characteristics.

Figure 2. Sample of Faculty Interviewees



Source. NSF Faculty Interviews, February 2019

Figure 3. Characteristics of Faculty Interviewees



Source. NSF Faculty Interviews, February 2019

The evaluator and project team leaders organized one site visit in the first week of February, which was one week after the first faculty workshop of the year. The evaluator conducted face-to-face interviews with four faculty members individually, and an evaluation colleague joined for three of the interviews. Several days after the visit, the evaluator interviewed an additional faculty member by phone. Faculty members who participated were asked about their experiences during the workshops; the partnerships with local community organizations; what they learned about the language, culture, and life histories of UTRGV students; and the siteclimate of the workshops (see Appendix). Faculty members who did not participate were asked about their plans for working with community partners and current knowledge about students' culture.

In addition to faculty interviews, the first site visit included interviews with the PI, the project coordinator, and one of the Co-PIs to gather information about the group dynamics and structure of the leadership team. All of the interviews were audiorecorded and transcribed. The evaluator coded the transcripts using techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and software (Atlas.ti) for qualitative research.

The evaluator made a second site visit almost two months later to meet with the project leadership team and to attend the third of the four community engagement workshops that the project carried out during the spring semester. The first half day consisted of a meeting in which the evaluator facilitated capacity building experiences for the team. The team engaged in an activity to develop an understanding of the logic of evaluation ("Activity 3: Evaluating Chocolate Chip Cookies Using Evaluation Logic"; Preskill & Russ-Eft, 2005). In addition, the team reviewed and provided feedback on the draft of the evaluation rubric and discussed the report brief delivered in March 2019 (which the evaluator had presented via teleconference with a few of the leaders earlier). During the second

half day of the site visit, the evaluator collected participant observation data of the third faculty workshop. During the observation, the evaluator took handwritten notes, which were reviewed, analyzed, and presented in the April report brief.

Findings

This section answers the first evaluation question only due to the early phase of the project and the adaptive approach of the evaluation. The evidence is a convergence of the perspectives of the five instructors, several project leaders, the evaluator's observations, and project documents. The focus is on the workshops that facilitate faculty members in developing the knowledge and skills needed to design and deliver courses that are culturally relevant and community engaged for students at UTRGV.

How well does the design of the project fit with the needs of the UTRGV and the local community?

The project leaders designed the workshops to offer faculty members opportunities to engage with their community partners, students, with one another, and with other members of the community at specific organizations. The opportunities to communicate were focused on the development of partnerships including informal interaction, which allowed relationships to deepen. Presentations were bilingual, which normalized Spanish as a language for communicating in academic settings and in the community at large. The activities focused on the culture and life history of students as immigrants, for example, through opportunities to interact directly with students at the first workshop and to visit community organizations in the region for the second workshop.

In addition, the actions of the project leadership were highly responsive to the evidence that emerged from the early reporting for the evaluation. The team addressed the needs that the faculty members expressed in the interviews in early February. During the evaluator's observation of the third workshop, various speakers delivered and discussed all of the logistical areas of faculty need. The faculty needs, which pertain to the development of cultural proficiency as in negotiating cultural attunement, is a skill that each individual will have to develop through openness, participation, and engagement; it is not a need that the project can fulfill directly or immediately.

In the assessment of cultural proficiency, the baseline data gathered through the interviews with faculty members demonstrated precompetence and levels that verged in the direction of cultural destructiveness. In the pool of the University community, implicit bias, micro-aggressions, and racism emerged. As designed, to the evaluator's knowledge, the workshops did not include activities that confronted internalized racism head-on. During the evaluator's observation of the third workshop, the conversation did not center on the "cultural capital" of students as assets, not deficiencies. The design of the workshops ought to include some activities focused on diversity explicitly to help grow the cultural proficiency of the University community.

The rating for the fit between the design of the faculty workshops and the needs of UTRGV in the local community was *good*, “Reasonably good performance overall; might have a few slight weaknesses but nothing serious.”

Table 4. Ratings for Project Fit

	Poor	Inadequate	Adequate	Good	Very good	Excellent
Faculty workshop in culturally-relevant pedagogy						

Four Faculty Workshops

The project designed and delivered four faculty workshops approximately monthly during the spring semester. The leadership team described the first workshop as an opportunity to celebrate the NSF grant and the relationships being formed. From this view, the purpose of the workshop was to bring people together, including the faculty members and their community partners. The project leadership asked participants to reflect on “what we are all here for,” that is, culturally relevant pedagogy and community engaged scholarship. In interviews, faculty members described specific activities. One activity was “speed dating” where participants were given several minutes to meet someone new, including students; talk with that person; and then share with the large group what they learned. Another activity described was a World Café with several tables, each with a facilitator and a unique question written on a card. The participants selected which tables to visit and joined the discussion. Group discussion ensued.

For the second workshop, participants took a field trip in a bus to several different community organizations. Everyone in attendance, faculty members and their community partners alike, got exposed to cultural experiences in the Rio Grande Valley with which they may or may not be familiar. The leadership team noticed that during the trip faculty members and their community partners were building relationships and bonding with one another. The leaders recounted what a faculty member who had lived in the Valley for 14 years and participated in the trip said: He gained new insight into the experiences of UTRGV students, many of whom were poor performing in math and science, and the stress they experience. The professor had enthusiasm and expressed an urge to share skills with the Rio Grande Valley community and with students.

The third faculty workshop, in which the evaluator participated in observed, covered many topics and activities. University staff from several different offices across campus presented information about formal agreements, finding funding, intellectual property, and syllabus development. The project leaders led participants, including faculty members and community partners, on a tour of

the UTRGV garden and the new College of Sciences building, recognized their involvement at a research symposium of science faculty and students, and provided a working lunch for collaborating with community partners to design the syllabus of their community engagement courses. Along the route through the College of Sciences, the group explored the laboratory of a faculty member who had forged a relationship with a community partner in 2018, coordinating her research into natural pharmaceuticals and the desire of a community agency to develop an organic garden to engage elementary school children.

The evaluator did not observe the fourth faculty workshop, nor received documents from the event. Consequently, there is no description.

Project Needs

To assess the fit between the design of the project and needs of the University and local communities, we start with a definition of needs. Here we defined needs as a measurable gap between what currently exists and what people desire for the future (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014). As represented by the Theory of Change presented in Figure 1, the project postulates a link between the strategy of training faculty in culturally relevant pedagogy and student outcomes. It is through the workshops in community engagement that faculty members should develop competency to design and deliver courses that reflect culturally relevant pedagogy for the students at UTRGV, who are predominantly Hispanic. So, to understand the needs of faculty, we examine baseline data on where the faculty members who participated in the workshops began with respect to competence in the language, culture, and history of UTRGV students.

Through the case study interviews in February, the evaluators gathered data about the attitudes and beliefs that faculty members hold regarding the culture, language, and history of the students that they teach and people in the local community with whom they engage as they develop courses in community engagement. Again, as a case study and not a representative sample of faculty members across the University, the data constitute a snapshot of what can be found in the population and how different parts of the system are integrated, but are not a generalizable finding to describe the population as a whole.


Cultural Proficiency

To determine an approximation from the faculty interviews, we compared their comments regarding culture, language, history to the cultural proficiency continuum of Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, and Terrell (2005). The continuum is a six-point conceptual framework that advances from from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency as depicted and briefly explicated in Table 5.

The arrow in the table represents the direction of potential personal growth from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency.

Table 5. Cultural Proficiency Continuum

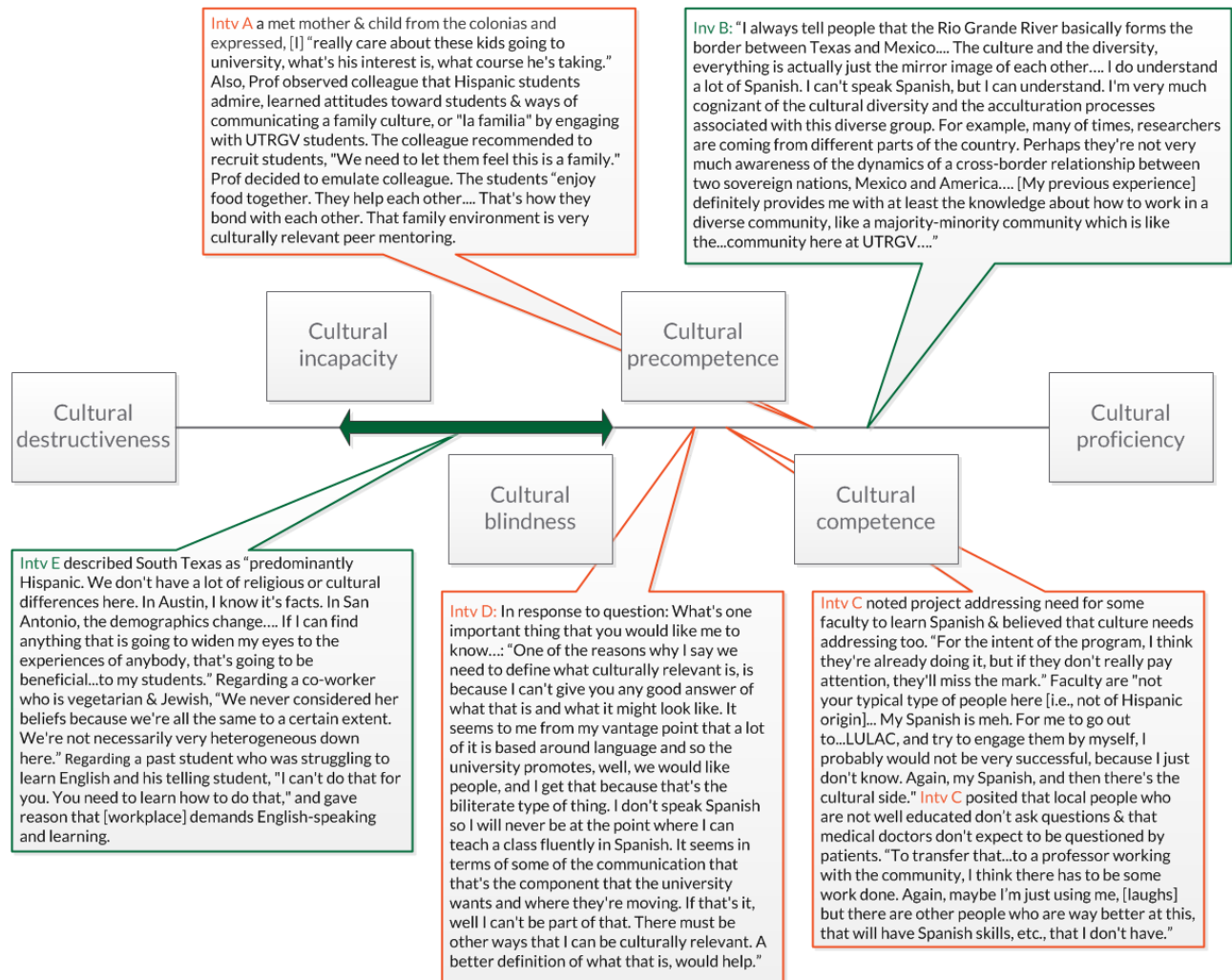
Points on Continuum	General approach
Cultural destructiveness	Eliminating other people's cultures
Cultural incapacity	Believing in the superiority of one's own culture and behaving in ways that disempower another's culture
Cultural blindness	Acting as if cultural differences do not matter or as if there are no differences among and between cultures
Cultural precompetence	Recognizing the limitations of one's knowledge and skills or an organization's practices when interacting with other cultural groups
Cultural competence	Interacting with others using as the standard the five essential elements (i.e., assess culture, value diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, adapt to diversity, institutionalize cultural knowledge)
Cultural proficiency	Esteeming culture, interacting effectively in a variety of cultural groups, committing to continuous learning



Source. Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, and Terrell (2005)

In the interviews, the faculty members were asked about their knowledge of the language, culture and life history of the students who come from the Rio Grande Valley or are immigrants. Their responses to this and other questions constituted the evidence used to place the perspectives on this continuum. Figure 4 is a graphic that represents quotations and paraphrases from the interviews. For the most part, the responses landed in the cultural precompetence zone, that is, the statements given demonstrate faculty members' understanding of limitations in their own knowledge and skills. Some of the statements demonstrated cultural competency in that the faculty members assessed their own level of knowledge and/or skills. This group of statements reflected observations of RGV culture, valuing of diversity, and actions taken to adapt to the culture. In contrast, statements in one of the interviews fluctuated at the lower end of the scale between cultural incapacity, blindness, and precompetence, which is represented by the green double-headed arrow in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Cultural Proficiency in Interview Statements



Source. UTRGV IUSE Faculty Interviews, February 2019

In statements that reflected cultural precompetence, faculty members expressed what they lacked. In interview D, the statements reflected a struggle with understanding what is culturally relevant and the University's promotion of the charge of the B3 Institute, that is, bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism. The faculty member did not expect to ever become fluent enough to teach a class in Spanish. Although this faculty member attended the first workshop that included a World Café with a discussion of cultural relevant pedagogy, the professor reported not having enough time to visit all of the tables and missing that discussion. Interview C expressed limitations due to a lack of fluent Spanish and discomfort with the level of cultural knowledge to negotiate a relationship with a specific community partner.

In interviews A and B reflecting cultural competence, the faculty members communicated their knowledge about the cultural dynamics going on around them, amongst students and other faculty members, and in the community. They also expressed a readiness themselves to try out engaging on the basis of their current knowledge of Hispanic culture. For example, in interview B, the faculty member described not speaking Spanish, but “understanding,” that is, actively listening for meaning when people speak Spanish. This faculty member also reflected on the cultural context along the Rio Grande River between Mexico and the US to understand the lived experience of locals. In interview A, the faculty member described observing and getting guidance from a colleague of Hispanic background to interact with UTRGV students by supporting the feeling of family in the university context, which the interviewee referred to as an expression of Hispanic culture.

In one interview, the statements fluctuated around the categories of cultural incapacity and cultural blindness. In interview E, the faculty member expressed cultural blindness in describing South Texas as not having many religious and cultural differences. The faculty member also communicated cultural precompetence in the thought that their learning about differences could benefit students in the context of a coworker’s vegetarianism and Judaism. In addition, faculty member expressed some intolerance, and perhaps cultural incapacity, in the expectation that a student who was struggling to learn English had to adapt alone. This statement contrasted with the assets-based approach to serving Hispanic college students that the project designers have adopted.

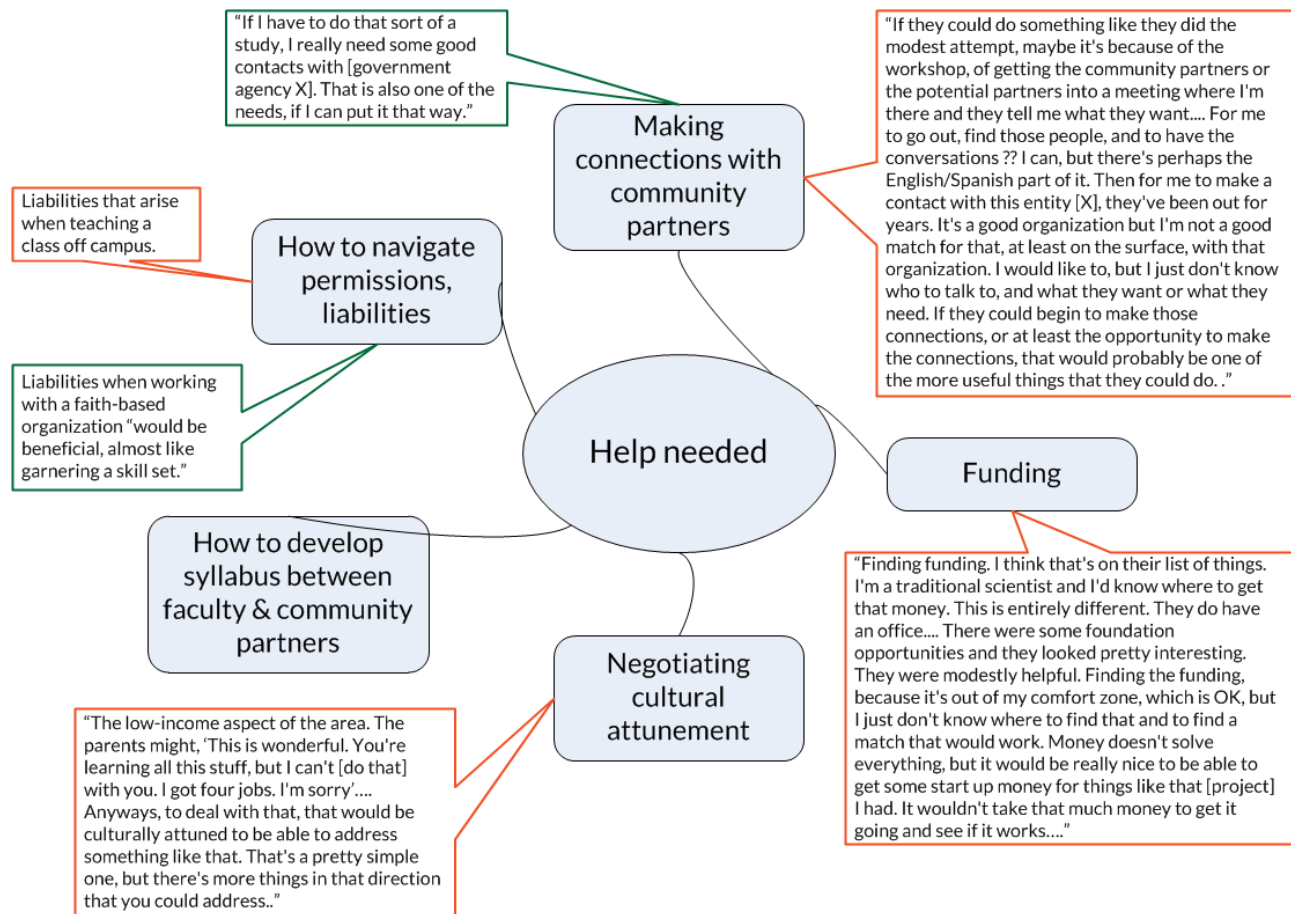
In sum, the case study gives an approximation of what the project can expect in the knowledge and skills regarding language, culture, and history of UTRGV students and the community that faculty members possess. Just as the project addresses head on deficit thinking in favor of assets-based thinking, the knowledge and skills that faculty members bring to their teaching and working with the RGV community can be viewed as assets. Altshud argues that combining an assessment of needs with assets refocuses attention on resources available in the community (Engle & Altshud, 2014).

From the interviews of case study, we can see that the competency of some faculty members constitute assets that might bring others along in the development of cultural proficiency. These assets contribute to the influence of the workshop activities. In the case of UTRGV faculty in the College of Sciences, after the first workshop, some faculty members were actively learning about the language, culture, and history of UTRGV students and the community, reflecting on ways to adapt to the diversity on campus, and managing cultural dynamics to benefit students. Even the statements from interview E acknowledged the benefits to students of learning about differences, an idea that has potential be a resource for change inasmuch as faculty members act on it.

Faculty Needs

While the project stakeholders envisioned growth in cultural proficiency, which is one need, the faculty members themselves articulated other needs during the interviews. Questions that elicited faculty needs asked about what they would like to see addressed and learn in upcoming workshops and what they would like to share about themselves moving forward with community engagement at UTRGV. Figure 5 delineates faculty needs given.

Figure 5. Needs of Faculty from Interviews



Source. UTRGV IUSE Faculty Interviews, February 2019

The faculty needs listed grouped into at least two categories. On the one hand was the desire to develop knowledge and skills that pertain to logistical issues as in navigating permissions and liabilities linked to offering courses with community partners, developing syllabi together, and seeking funding. The project could convey the information as seen in the third workshop, and faculty members would have to take ownership to pull together and enact it. On the other hand was

the desire to find and make connections with community partners as well as the complex skill of negotiating cultural attunement. While the project could expose faculty members and community partners to the history and cultural experiences of students from the region as during the tour of community organizations in the second workshop, faculty members' gaining the knowledge and honing the skills would require their own introspection, willingness to take risks, and openness to exploring differences.

Needs of Community Partners

Although the data for this report did not draw from community partners directly, a little information about their needs was gathered through the interviews of faculty members and the observation of the third workshop. One of the faculty members who participated in the workshop discovered that a potential community partner had a need for teaching elementary school children the same science that the professor taught pre-service teachers. Through this project's bringing together faculty members and community organizations in the workshops in Spring 2018, a need in the community surfaced. The resources in the knowledge and skills of one faculty member at UTRGV met the need. Similarly, during the tour of the College of Sciences, the need of a community organization to develop a garden through which to educate elementary school-age children about science was met through the collaboration with a UTRGV professor who conducted pharmaceutical research into the chemical components of medicinal herbs. The community organization involved children in science learning through gardening and the faculty researcher studied the herbs grown in the garden. During the meeting to develop the evaluation rubric, stakeholders discussed the development of a community engagement course that addressed the desire of community members who lived in the colonias to develop gardens. A faculty member engaged UTRGV students in collecting and analyzing soil samples gathered there to determine its quality and whether or not it was safe for planting. These three examples illustrate community needs that emerged and how this project facilitated the answer to those needs with the resources of UTRGV faculty and students.

Fit Between Design and Needs

The findings in this report address the question of how well the project design fits with the University and the local community. As in the previous section, the judgment of fit of the design divides into the needs of the project in meeting goals, the needs of faculty members in the role of workshop participants, and the needs of community partners.

Project Needs: Cultural Proficiency

The stakeholders who participated in the meeting to develop the evaluation rubric envisioned that the faculty workshops in culturally relevant pedagogy would provide opportunities for attendees to

“engage in respectful, open-minded dialogue; get exposed to students’ language, culture, life history as immigrants; look into their own implicit biases and explore student language and ‘cultural capital’ as assets, not deficiencies; confront racism and micro-aggressions through diversity training” (Table 1).

Project leaders designed components of the faculty workshops to provide opportunities for this engagement, exposure, and exploration. As the evaluator observed, participants of the third workshop gained exposure to students’ language through the delivery of all of the presentations and large group discussions in both English and Spanish. The design of the second workshop offered opportunities to observe cultural experiences of people who live in Rio Grande Valley firsthand. And as project leaders recounted in the description of the second workshop (see “Four Faculty Workshops”), one faculty member shared gaining invaluable insight into the cultural experiences of UTRGV students.

Through the “speed dating” activity at the first workshop, one faculty member recounted learning from a first-generation college student the responses from her extended family to her enrollment at the University. Now that she was majoring in biology, they asked her to help with their illnesses and injuries, even though she did not have medical knowledge. The faculty member stated, “It was clearly that kind of a thing that they never had the resource, perhaps, of someone so accessible that actually knew something that might be helpful.” This quote illustrated the faculty’s learning about the demands that some students who are first-generation might experience in their families as they gain education. On the other hand, sources of knowledge that are not academic can be “helpful,” and the wording could portray implicit bias.

Faculty Needs

As discussed in the second report brief for the evaluation of this project (Burd, April 2019), the leaders responded swiftly to the faculty needs expressed and reported in the first report brief (Burd, March 2019; see Figure 5). The third workshop addressed all of the needs pertaining to logistical issues of teaching a course with community engagement. It included presentations and opportunities to ask questions from directors and other staff in charge of sponsored projects, development for Corporate and Foundation Relationships (CFR) at UTRGV, safety and liability of UTRGV students and employees, patents and intellectual property, legal concerns, research and others. The speakers also made clear what their role was not. For example, it was not to find community partners for faculty members to work with, nor to find faculty members for community partners. The PI invited the participants, faculty and community partners alike, to access these leaders and staff and to make full use of their expertise and experience and stated, “It’s not your job to figure out how to do this

[e.g., draft a memorandum of agreement].” So the PI encouraged faculty members and community partners to make proactive use of resources at UTRGV.

The project leaders designed the four faculty workshops together to address the other group of faculty needs, that of making connections with community partners and of negotiating cultural attunement. By design, project leaders invited faculty members to participate in the workshops only if the faculty had established relationships with community partners. Consequently, the workshops could help faculty members to develop relationships with community partners, but not to establish connections. This scenario would be true for the quote in the orange callout box in Figure 5 linked to “Making connections with community partners,” which represents workshop participants. Indeed, the project provided opportunities for faculty members and their community partners to collaborate and deepen their relationships during the workshops. Project leaders designed the project to help faculty members develop skills in cultural attunement as discussed in the previous section “Cultural Proficiency.” As observed in the third workshop, faculty members and community partners sat together at tables, walked and talked together casually on the campus tour, and engaged in reflection activities and developed syllabi during work periods.

In addition to the categories of help needed delineated in Figure 5, one faculty member expressed the need for a definition of culturally relevant pedagogy (see interview D in Figure 4). More than once during the evaluator’s observation of the third workshop, the project coordinator and a liaison in charge of building relationships between the UTRGV College of Sciences and community partners defined culturally relevant pedagogy. Although a dialogue between participants and facilitators about the concept did not occur, the leadership team acknowledged the faculty members’ desire to explore the topic. Additionally, a recent article by Ladson-Billings, a thought leader in the field, was included in the packets of all participants. In designing the workshop, the leadership team responded to the faculty needs communicated in the first report brief (Burd, March 2019).

Needs of Community Partners

As stated above, this report does not include data directly collected from community partners. Moreover, it did not include data collection tools that asked community partners, nor faculty members how well the engagement interest their needs. Here, we have only a matching at a face value of the needs certain community members presented and the answer that faculty members devised. Perhaps, in future iterations of the evaluation this sort of data will be warranted and collected.

Key Findings and Implications

The leadership team as the UTRGV IUSE project rolled out a series of four faculty workshops in the Spring of 2019. The workshops were well-attended with faculty members and community partners collaborating and developing relationships through the events. Members of the partnerships engaged in conversation and planning to prepare courses in community engagement for UTRGV students.

The leadership team designed the workshops to provide opportunities for faculty to engage the UTRGV students' language, culture, and history as immigrants. Some faculty members recounted insightful experiences that moved the needle on their perceptions of the cultural experiences of students. However, evidence of implicit bias and cultural intolerance manifested. The inclusion of activities that offer faculty members to learn more about themselves with regards to diversity is warranted to deepen faculty development anticipated through the project.

Going forward, the evaluation should include data from a more inclusive pool of faculty members who participate in the workshops to advance the investigation of other questions. For example, to assess the quality and implementation of the workshops, all of the faculty members who participate could be invited to complete a survey about their experiences, not only with regards to the quality and implementation of the workshops, but also to the value of the activities to designing and implementing community engagement courses.

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Attributions

Scientist graphic purchased from Gan Khoon Lay at [The Noun Project](#).

Appendix

Interview Schedule for Faculty Members Who Participated in Workshops

1. How long have you worked at UTRGV?
2. The principal investigators of the grant who developed the community engagement workshops for faculty conducted four workshops last spring. Did you attend any of those? If so, what did you learn in these workshops? What was most memorable? What was especially helpful or relevant to your classes? What (if any) information you learned in the workshop have you implemented in your classes? Why/not?
3. Have you taught any courses that are listed as community engagement or included elements of community engaged scholarship or learning? If so, please describe.
4. Tell us about any partnerships you have (or would like to have) with community agencies/organizations. How would you like to incorporate/integrate community partners in your classes?

For past workshop:

5. What do you feel that you took away from that experience? What did you learn in these workshops? What was most memorable? What was especially useful or relevant to your classes? What (if any) information in the workshop do you plan to implement in your classes? Why/not?
6. How much did you learn that was new to you about the language, culture, and life history of the students who come from the Rio Grande Valley or are immigrants? How well did the workshop help you improve how you engage with the students in your classes? To what extent did the workshop provide opportunities to explore the experiences of UTRGV students as assets?
7. In what ways did the workshop challenge your thoughts or practices with respect to the language, culture, and history of students at UTRGV?
8. How would you characterize the conversations you had with other faculty during the workshop? How respectful and open-minded were the conversations? Did any tensions emerge? If so, please describe.
9. Is there anything you would like to have specifically addressed in future upcoming workshops?
10. What questions do you have for the principal investigators of the grant at this point?
11. We've talked about a lot of things. What's one important thing you would like me to know about how you see yourself moving forward with community engagement classes?

Interview Schedule for Faculty Who Did Not Participate in Workshop

The faculty members who did not participate in workshops were asked questions 1, 3, 4, & 9-11 above. Questions 2, 7, & 8 above were modified to reflect not having participated.

Interview Schedule for Members of the Leadership Team

1. Describe your role on this project?
2. What are the leverage points in this project?
 - a. Where is their energy and focus?
 - b. What activities do people seem most animated about?
 - c. Where is the most potential for impact?
3. What are the potential challenges, gaps, and road blocks?
4. Describe how the group communicates.
 - a. How well do you think the group is learning together?
 - i. Suggestions for improvement?
 - b. How do you make decisions as a group?
 - i. Areas of strength
 - ii. Areas of growth
 - c. Where is there energy vs. conflict?
5. How are you currently using data?
 - a. How would you like to use data to inform the development of this project?
6. How do you keep track of...
 - a. Progress?
 - b. Decisions made?
 - c. Emerging ideas?