Beginning with its inception in 1994, the efforts of the First-Year Learning Communities Program (FYLCP) at TAMU-CC have been informed by research on student success, including literature focused on Latina/o students. Learning communities have been described as "one of the most powerful interventions on the educational landscape because they provide a comprehensive, cost-effective framework for enhancing student learning" (Smith et al., 2004, p.4). The FYLCP began with the faculty's consultation of learning communities experts at Evergreen College, continued through the self-study of the Foundations of Excellence and Title V grants, and currently motivates Co-Director participation and leadership in regional and national learning community and first-year experience conferences and publications.

In spite of enrollment of primarily upper 50% of high school class students, TAMU-CC experiences many challenges in student success that impact retention of students, particularly from first to second year. As an institution that enrolls large numbers of Latino/a, first-generation, and low income students, we have the responsibility to provide our students with systems to support them as they encounter the challenges of college intellectual, academic, social, and cultural transitions. Outside barriers such as jobs, family support, health issues, including mental health issues, and all matters related to money impact student success. Additionally, many students believe that their secondary experiences did not prepare them adequately for college in terms of numbers of hours required and methods of studying, and time committed to developing their abilities in critical thinking, reading, writing, and math. Students’ assessment of their high school experience, particularly the lack of curricular preparation, is reinforced year after year by 50% failure rates on exams in large lecture first-year courses.

Since spring 2005 the First Year Experience at TAMU-CC has been centralized by the First Year Experience committee which maintains representation of various entities across the divisions of academic affairs, student affairs, and student services. In all other ways, the FYE is a decentralized effort comprised of many units that serve students in various ways.

The University Core Curriculum Program (UCCP) is both defined by the State of Texas and TAMU-CC. It was deliberately restricted to fewer choices in each category in order provide all students with a common experience. These first and second year courses are usually taught in large lecture format, and are both incorporated into learning communities and taken as freestanding courses. They comprise the majority of first year students' total credit hours; therefore, improved large lecture teaching will benefit all students, even those exempt from the learning community experience (those transferring in more than 23 credit hours).

Vision for QEP
The First Year Experience and Core Curriculum program will be significantly improved by adjusting to the needs and preferences of millenial students and their families. Our goal is to challenge and support students simultaneously; therefore, our efforts focus on both academic challenges and improved teaching and support systems designed to "catch" students who are at risk of attrition. Greater coordination both face-to-face and virtually will provide seamless transitions, thereby better preparing students for success.
QEP Action Plan

Teaching
- Continued use of the learning community structure and resulting interdisciplinary teaching and learning
- Greater professionalization of seminar leaders and composition instructors through the development of permanent appointments in the program, increased wage(s), and/or administrative support for faculty to teach seminar.
- Development of "alternative models" of seminar which might include:
  - A transfer student seminar course to address the needs of students transferring in 24 hours or more.
  - A face-to-face seminar and/or internship/applied experience seminar course for students at sophomore standing and above.
- Professional development of large lecture professors teaching in the Core. Rewards system for excellence in teaching for faculty teaching large lecture courses.
- Continued focus on writing, including writing-across-the-curriculum, and information literacy and uses of innovative technologies for teaching and learning

Mentoring
- Increased support for the TIDE mentoring program, coordination of TIDE with Women's Center Leadership and Student Support Services programs
- Improved safety net for students at risk and/or on probation
- Improved coordination and communication with professional advisors in every college (FY liaison advisors)

Co-Curricular Programs
- Deliberate infusion of wellness component into Core courses and coordination with co-curricular events.
- FY Convocation

Financial Support
- Increased quantity of FY scholarships and on-campus jobs
- Educational programs regarding money management, debt, and academic success.

Virtual Presence
- A branding/marketing study to develop a logo and promotion materials for the FYE at TAMU-CC.
- A strong, university-supported website to provide access to all elements of the FYE available to staff, faculty, families, and students, both current and prospective, coordinated or connected with admissions applications & pre-orientation survey.
- Professional support for wiki.
FYE Oversight

There are two committees that bring together the various constituencies committed to Core and first-year students' experiences: the First Year Experience Committee and the University Core Curriculum Resource Group.

Mission Statement of FY Experience Committee
With the goal of building educated citizens (promoting civic engagement), the First Year Experience at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is a collaborative effort by Student Affairs, Student Services, and Academic Affairs to support and challenge students as they transition to the academic work and social life of the university.

Goals
- Academic success of students in FY
- Social success of students in FY
- Engaging students in civic and intellectual ways
- Student learning: critical thinking, writing, researching, interdisciplinary connections, diversity.

Objectives
- Transition of students to college
- Integration of student academically and socially to TAMUCC (Jones & Castellenos, 2003, xvi)
- Retention of students to second year

Aspirations
- Persistence of students in college
- Graduation of students

Divisions and Programs participating in the FYE include:

**Academic Affairs**
- First-Year Learning Communities Program (FYLCP)
- First-Year Writing Program (FYWP)
- Honors Program
- Library

**Student Affairs**
- Career Services
- Disability Services
- Counselling Center
- TIDE mentoring

**Enrollment Management**
- Tutoring and Learning Center
- Orientation
- Transition Center
- Financial Aid
- Admission & Records
University Core Curriculum Resource Group

Established in 2007 by Dr. Carlos Huerta, the resource group pulls together representatives from all divisions that teach core courses. This body is a vehicle for discussion of Core issues related to teaching and assessment. The UCCP Resource Group (RG) includes a representative from each component area discipline in the 45-hour core curriculum. The RG provides an important link between the faculty who teach in the core curriculum and the Co-Directors of the UCCP for sharing ideas for program and faculty development. The Resource Group also works with the Co-Directors on assessment of the 45-hour core curriculum.

Camden/Miramar Housing