2014 AHE COMPENDIUM

The story of **Texas Tech University** is part of a compendium that contains case studies of six colleges and universities from across the United States that implemented AVID for Higher Education (AHE). Whether implemented as a First-Year Seminar course or integrated with an existing tutoring or mentoring program, AHE is making a positive difference in student learning. *Read more . . .*

TEXAS TECH

UNIVERSITY

CONTRIBUTORS

Fernando Valle, EdD, Associate Professor, Education Leadership, College of Education, Texas Tech University

Michelle Kiser, EdD, Director of Support Operations for Academic Retention (SOAR), Texas Tech University

Stacy A. Jacob, PhD, Assistant Professor, Higher Education, Slippery Rock University (Pennsylvania)

Narissra Maria Punyanunt-Carter, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Texas Tech University

Charles Crews, PhD, Associate Professor of Counseling and Guidance, Texas Tech University

Zhaomin He, PhD, Assistant Professor, College of Nursing, University of Texas–Tyler

Beverly Finch, PhD, AVID District Director/EDL, Lubbock ISD

John Rivera, Assistant Academic Dean, College of Engineering**,** Texas Tech University

Kasaundra Garcia, Unit Coordinator, Office of Academic Enrichment; AHE Liaison, Texas Tech University

Paul Frazier, EdD, Assistant Vice President, Institutional Diversity, Equity & Community Engagement, Texas Tech University

Jesse Jalomo, Managing Director, Upward Bound, Texas Tech University

---

CAMPUS PROFILE & INFORMATION

Type of Institution: Public, 4-year research institution

Total Enrollment: 33,111 Students

Student Population:
- Undergraduates, age 24 or below: 90%
- Underrepresented minority: 23%
- Federal aid recipients: 46%
- Pell-eligible first-time students: 24%

AHE System: Student Success Initiative (SSI)

AHE Campus Timeline: 3rd year (began in 2011)

Funding: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB); Institutional

Professional Development— Administrators/Faculty/Staff/Tutors: 343

Summer Institute Attendance: 3 years

At every Red Raider orientation, football game, and student activity, Texas Tech University (TTU) students wear scarlet and black, proudly sing the school fight song, and point to the sky with a traditional "guns up" hand sign. With an annual entering first-year class of close to 6,000 students, TTU passes on its traditions of campus life, academic success, and the goal and aspiration of becoming a Red Raider alum to every new class of students and their families. Many Texas colleges boast grand campuses, large student populations, and a college football following that resembles a religion. It is part of the excitement of the fall semester college atmosphere and it helps to establish pride in belonging to a school with tradition, identity, and legacy. Students from all over Texas, the country, and the world attend TTU, which keeps the university focused on strategic goals, diversity and globalization, and serving the needs of millennial students.

Colleges and universities across the country, much like TTU, continue to work on improving student retention and success for every student by focusing on academic support. The personnel of university departments find innovative ways to refine their curricula to connect students with the culture of college and to help them develop skills to succeed in and out of the classroom. TTU has created multiple departments, units, and inclusive spaces across campus to ensure that first-year Red Raiders are supported in ways that allow them to thrive in a rigorous university environment.

When the concept of AVID was introduced, faculty, staff, and administration thought that it was solely a high school support system. The mindset was that the university already provided AVID types of services, and AVID was met with skepticism and limited support. A grant opportunity with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) brought a funding conversation across the vice president's desk. The next steps included holding exploratory meetings, discussions with the AVID for Higher Education (AHE) national office, and the recruitment of university faculty and personnel for a potential leadership team. When the funding notification, grant acceptance, and green light was given, the vice president provided start-up funding for implementation support of AVID, and the newly formed leadership team planned their first AVID Summer Institute (SI).

This case study highlights the first steps and implementation of AHE at TTU. The last three years (2011–2013) have been filled with personnel changes, student recruitment, course improvement, AVID public school partnerships, and, as of Fall 2014, institutionalization. AHE is now formally part of the Office of Academic Enrichment [1] at TTU.

The development of this case study is a collaborative effort. At the center of this collaboration are reflections of professional development, AVID SI, teaching AVID for College Success courses, public school partnerships, and implementation of AHE strategies in a university environment.

The goal of the case study is to provide transparency on the complex work in higher education. We acknowledge our rocky start as we found our team identity and home at a large institution. The unique experiences of each AHE team member provide a narrative of stakeholder voices. It is our intention to provide universities and colleges real perspectives, recommendations, AHE teaching contexts, and points of view from various roles across the university system.

FOSTERING NETWORKS & ACADEMIC STRATEGIES
UNIVERSITY PERSPECTIVE: DR. FERNANDO VALLE

The role of the TTU AHE Liaison was instrumental in bridging resources, connecting programs across campus, and monitoring the growth and development of AHE at TTU. During the first AVID SI, working with a brand new leadership team was a challenge. The leaders, directors, and university personnel present asked questions normal to university programming: Which office will be responsible for funding? Who will monitor and supervise data collection and grant fidelity? What is my role and responsibility? We already provide these academic support resources, where will AHE fit? How is AHE different than what we already offer?

The SI provided the team an opportunity to discuss the first year nuts and bolts of implementation: the true work of any program. Ultimately, a consensus was

[1]http://www.depts.ttu.edu/diversity/academicenrichment/avid_higher.php

reached to utilize the Learning Center as a home for AVID. Using existing tutors, academic spaces, and the support system of the Learning Center supported AVID's growth at TTU. The WICOR framework harnessed our focus and energy. Key personnel were instrumental in developing and adding the AVID for College Success course (IS 1102) to the official roster of courses at TTU. Upon returning to campus after the first SI and scheduling tutor trainings, course collaboration meetings, and preparing for the first day of classes, AHE teaching faculty met to prepare the delivery and message of AHE. In the following subsections, we highlight the strategic spaces and ideas the AHE leadership team discussed and used to facilitate the implementation of AHE the first two years (2011 -2012).

Tutoring Across the Campus
One of the first strategic moves we made was to extend tutor training opportunities across the university. We realized tutors were hired by dorms, departments, athletic offices, and programs at TTU. Our first- and second-year tutor trainings were offered to tutors in many places and personnel—the Learning Center, engineering tutors, athletic and content tutors, and dormitory programs across the University. These tutoring spaces provided recruitment opportunities and helped us to spread the AVID message to other departments.

Piloting the AVID for College Success Course
AHE provided a year for team building and training before course implementation. Our faculty and leadership team were eager to pilot a section to bring readings and WICOR strategies to students, and to provide faculty experience with the new course. The spring semester course pilot provided faculty with experiential data to improve the course syllabus and recognize our points of confusion.

Incorporating Existing Resources
The Writing Center, Learning Center, and Teaching Learning and Professional Development Center at TTU became important parts of first-year student support. WICOR strategies and critical readings covered in the course were connected with academic environments and offices across campus. Our AVID students benefitted from faculty interactions, making use of the Writing Center, and the scholarship and financial aid workshop provided for their continued financial literacy.

Rebuilding Teams

The second and third year (2012–2013) addressed the reality of faculty promotions, changes of staff, and personnel movement across and within a large university system. The reconfigured leadership teams were carefully selected and a balance of faculty and staff made for a very productive AVID SI in our second year (2012). Our unsure footing in some areas provided the learning to improve and strategically utilize existing resources. As our university leadership changed at all levels, including presidents, provosts, and vice presidents, we experienced frozen assets and lowered confidence in the program's sustainability. We persisted despite limited resources and very small budgets. With excited faculty and lessons learned under our belt, we continued to implement and build a climate for AHE.

Expanding AVID in West Texas

We strategically included our surrounding AVID K–12 school partners in our projects and leadership team to build the AVID K–12 pipeline in West Texas. The result was a partnership between Lubbock Independent School District (Lubbock ISD), AVID, and TTU AHE that led to an AVID family night hosted at the university. With the focus on AVID student work, college readiness presentations from K–12 AVID and AVID university students were highlighted at the LISD/TTU College Readiness event for the last three years. With more than 400 participants and many first-year parents and students visiting TTU for the first time, this collaborative event has made college conversation much more real for all involved.

Bringing AHE to the TTU Campus
University Leadership View: Dr. Michelle Kiser

To successfully implement AVID at TTU, there were several meetings of the stakeholders in the decision-making process. These included the vice president of undergraduate education, faculty from the College of Education, and significant program entities such as academic support programs, mentor programs, and training programs. The initial meetings focused on completing the grant process and implementing the initial program requirements. The requirements included funding, training, tutoring, creating courses, and faculty. Questions we were trying to answer included: Where would AVID be housed? How would we

implement the training portion of the requirement? How would we create a course specific to AVID?

In the beginning of the implementation process, there were several obstacles that we had to overcome. TTU had not been exposed to AVID and creating the buy-in for an AVID program on the campus was difficult. Explaining and creating a positive assessment of AVID was the key to a successful buy-in by all of the stakeholders. Additional questions needing to be researched were: 1) How can AVID be a positive experience for the students? 2) How would the students be recruited? There was significant emphasis placed on the retention and persistence of students. AVID could assist the university with implementing techniques for students who would then use those techniques to successfully move forward in their college careers. Once the stakeholders agreed on moving forward, the tone was set for bringing AVID to campus. At this point, the group needed to be created, faculty selected, training initiated, and the road to AVID could proceed.

Building the Team

To create the best team possible, many factors were considered. Faculty members who were student oriented and were open to changing in-class techniques were highly sought after. We knew that academic programs, which would have an impact on the implementation of AVID and included tutoring and training programs, would be important inclusions on the team. Additional team members included others that would play a significant role in assisting with the implementation and recruiting of students. The final group included faculty and graduate students from the College of Education, staff and adjunct faculty from support operations for academic retention, and staff members within the division of Institutional Diversity. In addition, the AVID program at TTU needed to include a connection with the local AVID Secondary programs. The final addition to the group would be the local Lubbock ISD AVID program director. The TTU AVID program and the Lubbock ISD AVID program would maintain a significant relationship. From the beginning, some members of the team changed, but the majority of the team remained intact each year. Creating a team for the purpose of AVID implementation was not difficult and was very successful. Combining several team members from different aspects of the campus made the team more well-rounded and successful. Additionally, it

was beneficial to select team members with different backgrounds to ensure a more diverse team.

Aligning for College Success

AVID implementation included creating a course to be offered each semester that would introduce first-year and transfer students to both the philosophy of higher education through the AVID system as well as WICOR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading). The purpose of this new AVID Seminar (IS 1102) is to provide students with the individual determination and postsecondary skills and knowledge that enable them to be successful and complete their postsecondary education at TTU. We specifically designed the AVID course to expose students to AHE Strategies for Success, and to be part of a supportive mentoring and tutoring network at TTU. The mentoring and tutoring network allows students to develop the academic and non-academic insights, skills, dispositions, and resources necessary to excel as a TTU undergraduate.

To get this course off the ground, the teaching faculty wrote the course syllabus. Once the course syllabus was created, the course was presented to academic council at TTU. The course was approved and created in the system as a one-hour for-credit course taught at the first-year level. The course was open to any enrolled student, however; promoting the course became a difficult process as the course catalog featured multiple one-hour courses available for student enrollment.

Teaching, Learning, and Engaging

Creating a new program for TTU was challenging at times, but ultimately the rewards were worth the effort involved. I faced several struggles implementing the requirements from AVID because I had never used the techniques before. In addition, ensuring the students were recruited and enrolled in the course was a small challenge because of other offered courses that might have been more enticing. I enjoyed the experience of learning more about AVID and implementing the program at TTU. I would have been less likely to meet the College of Education faculty if it were not for this grant. The grant gave me more opportunities to meet with the THECB and the personnel within the AVID community.

I attended the AVID SI and was able to better understand AVID and the success the program has had in the secondary education system. I was very excited to provide the same opportunity to students at the higher education level. In the beginning, I did feel as if the information was somewhat still at the secondary level and wanted AVID to provide more sophisticated information for more advanced students. However, overall, being able to attend the AVID SI and work directly with the AVID team was very rewarding and I would recommend that this process remain a part of the AVID implementation program. Being with the team allowed specific time allotments for us to work together to create a campus plan that was successful.

CREATING AND LEADING CHANGE TAKES TRUST
FACULTY PERSPECTIVE: DR. STACY JACOB

My involvement with AVID evolved out of a writing partnership with a trusted colleague at TTU. Over the course of several semesters, Dr. Fernando Valle introduced me to AVID and told me about his past involvement with it. When we learned that AVID was developing postsecondary curriculum, I trusted that this was a project that I wanted to work on and, with Dr. Valle, to bring to TTU. Dr. Valle then proceeded to find partners across the university with whom we could work. Early on, we secured support from an upper level administrator and while that was good for us to get the AHE ball rolling, it did not allow us to build trust and buy-in with the assigned leaders that would become our AHE site team.

What happened instead was that our AVID team was assigned by an administrator to work with us. It was wonderful to have his support and I very much appreciate it, but it violated an essential characteristic that distinguishes postsecondary education from K–12 education—shared governance. We violated an important cultural standard of the institution and, as such, we experienced a rocky start. We should have concentrated on gaining buy-in, trust, and consensus with our new potential partners rather than have various directors and leaders assigned to the team.

I personally should have seen this as a fundamental misstep as I have spent my entire career in college administration and teach courses on higher education administration. My enthusiasm in being part of a team

that received a large state grant to implement a program that I believed could enable faculty to help struggling students overrode my education and training. I share this not to belittle myself, Dr. Valle, or my team (which has ultimately been quite successful), but rather in the spirit of openness for other postsecondary colleagues as they build AVID teams on their campuses. I absolutely believe in the work AVID does and in its potential to help faculty and students succeed; however, it is always important to remember that AVID was developed in K–12 environments, and as higher education faculty and administrators, we must adapt them to postsecondary environments.

Our first AVID training was both uplifting and discouraging—as a faculty member I was being inspired with new ways to think about and organize my teaching. During team meetings we learned that our team was largely disengaged and put off by the training. Upon investigation, we learned that a lot of the unhappiness stemmed from the cultural differences between higher education and K–12 education. As a side note, this difference is probably one of the most important things that all educators should be thinking about and working to repair: To truly help our students successfully transition to college we need to create K–16 partnerships, but to do so we need to understand one another.

"AVID helped make this good teacher a great teacher and I am ever so thankful for it."

At the 2011 AVID SI, our team was angry that part of the workshops required everyone to raise his/her hand and team members felt that they were being talked down to by K–12 AVID trainers. It should be noted that everyone we took to AVID training had an advanced degree. One team member said, "This isn't how administrators talk to one another." She was absolutely right. In a college environment, administrators are not usually viewed as students, but rather as colleagues who share decisions. During the first year, the AVID trainers were not speaking our team's language yet and did not understand operating procedures for college administrators. AVID had great things to teach, but we found that our team had trouble listening to it. One specific example was the AVID trainer kept talking about how AVID changes the culture of a school, a large claim to process for higher education professionals of an institution with 40,000 students. Our team could not buy

that, did not believe it, and did not believe that AVID could transform the culture of TTU.

Higher education makes a distinct difference between the concept of culture and climate. [Whereas] climate is mutable, changeable—culture . . . does not like change. In higher education, we work to change problematic climates and only tackle culture if it is necessary because we see it as a Sisyphean task. In addition, the culture at TTU is a very positive one, so why would we want to change the very thing that we love and that attracts students to study with us? The climate, well, that was something we could change and make better. Changing the climate to help students could have motivated our team, but the idea of changing the dearly loved culture just made us disengage . . . I will say that the team eventually embraced AHE. We had a rocky start that, in retrospect, could have been avoided through building trust and through a better understanding of the university on the part of AVID.

I am indebted to and thankful for my AHE training. As a faculty member, you are not taught how to teach, but it is assumed that earning a PhD makes you fit to teach. My doctorate in higher education taught me a lot about colleges and universities, but not a lot about the art of teaching. Personally, I have learned how to teach by investing in my own development—taking a college teaching class, going to workshops, reading teaching theory, and talking with great teachers. If you talked with my students (who are all graduate students), I think they would say that I am a talented teacher. However, AVID taught me a lot about teaching and how to unlock hard concepts for students. I use many of the AVID strategies. I learned they are successful even for graduate students.

TEACHING AVID: FUN AND CHALLENGING
FACULTY VIEW: DR. NARISSRA PUNYANUNT-CARTER

I think the students who learn AVID strategies are very lucky, because when I was a college student, I was not exposed to these techniques. I had to figure out how to take tests and organize my time on my own. I am glad that I am able to teach these study skills to students so that they can advance and succeed. I share the following insights with prospective AHE faculty.

1. **Take time to really get to know your students.** *A semester is such a short time to really know all the challenges and obstacles that your students encounter on a daily basis. In the AVID class, there isn't much time to talk about personal issues. Hence, I make time to spend at least an hour with each student outside of class. They sign up at the beginning of the semester and share with me details about their career goals and their college expectations. I want to know who my students are and what kinds of things they need to learn to be successful.*

2. **Give time to let your students learn the concepts.** *Even though we talk about a strategy and try to apply it to a class situation, it may be hard for some students to really see the importance of the concept until later. For instance, the first time I talked about Cornell notes, my students didn't understand. I tried giving a mini-lecture, and having them take Cornell notes while I lectured. Then, I asked them to pick a class and use Cornell notes in it. It was so interesting to see how much it made a difference when they put the lesson into practice in their other classes.*

3. **Application.** *I am a big believer in application. Students need to be able to apply what they have learned. As instructors, we might teach an AVID strategy and talk about its importance. However, if we don't show how we can apply it, then it doesn't serve any purpose or relevance for the student. Applying these skills are so important because students have to be able to use these skills in other classes besides the AVID class.*

4. **Bring in student models and mentors.** *There have been a few times when I have had classroom problems. For instance, I will have disruptive behavior or a student who is rather rude. Most of the time, I will encounter students with no motivation for being in college or students who are not trying to succeed in college. When that happens, I look for student models and mentors to come into the classroom and talk about how to really do well in college. As a professor, I can talk to them all day about* these skills. However, I think it is so relatable for the students to hear this advice from a cohort or peer. They can relate with each other and communicate on a level that makes sense.

5. **Encouragement.** *In this day and age, I would assume that most teachers would encourage and support their students through words and actions. However, I have found that some people have a different conceptualization of encouragement. They think it is just about saying "good job" or "nice work!" Encouragement needs to be displayed both genuinely and sincerely. We should really pay attention to what students do right. There are many people who will focus on what others do wrong. We need more positivity in our lives and being a good supportive role model will truly help students succeed. I love hearing from students who tell me that they graduated because I said some words of encouragement to them and that I believed in them.*

6. **Communicate.** *I am a communication studies professor, so I think communication is very important. It is not just about talking to your students. It is about displaying your passion through verbal and nonverbal cues. I think students need to learn to be better communicators. They live in a very text-savvy world. They don't know how to really enjoy the uniqueness and richness of face-to-face conversations. Take time in class to let your students communicate with their peers. Show them how to communicate effectively, appropriately, competently, and confidently. They will become better individuals professionally and personally because of this skill.*

7. **Mindfulness.** *The last recommendation I have is to be mindful of your students. We live in such a different world than they do. The students today are facing challenges and obstacles that were much different from those faced by our generation. The way they date, eat, study, and learn are vastly different. We need to acknowledge these differences and understand how these differences might affect perceptions. Being mindful will allow us to recognize the special*

elements of our classroom—the students, the dynamics, and the learning.

All in all, I believe in AVID. I have seen the differences it makes in students' lives. I hope these suggestions will help you as you teach an AVID seminar course. A small difference can have a huge effect on your students. Perhaps you will never know the impact of what you have done, but by including these points into your classes, I believe that you will help so many students and truly make a difference in the world.

DEVELOPING FACULTY CREATES POSITIVE OUTCOMES
FACULTY PERSPECTIVE: DR. CHARLES CREWS

I was familiar with AVID from my years working in K–12 schools, so taking the leap to teach AVID in higher education was minor. I did refresh my knowledge of Arnett's (2000) emerging adulthood (18–24 years) to make sure that I was taking into account the developmental needs of the population I would be teaching.

The first AHE professional development session I attended was at AVID SI. At this Institute, I was able to see many of the AVID strategies modeled. I learned by doing the strategies, which in turn helped me apply pertinent strategies in my higher education classroom. Learning about WICOR and the AVID organization strategies was certainly one of my favorites.

I was extremely timid to begin the AHE program with first-year students in college. I worked as a counselor with students in special education in the Texas public schools before becoming a professor. In my past position, 95% of my students were qualified for services because of a behavioral disorder. I was hired at TTU to teach graduate students. Though I was nervous about using the AHE techniques and strategies with undergraduates, the first day I was amazed at the response from the students.

My first AVID course consisted of a mixture of motivated students and students who, in turn, had motivated parents. They ranged from students who brought with them nearly 45 college credits out of high school to students who seemed to have no interest in attending higher education. This mixture helped ensure social learning (Bandura, 1971), but also helped me to see how interventions worked with all the students regardless of ability level. The Think-Pair-Share strategy increased discussions tremendously by holding each student accountable for participation. After practicing and using these techniques with students at the undergraduate level, I adopted some AVID techniques to use with my graduate students at the master and doctorate level. I found huge benefits implementing the Socratic Seminar style of questioning to deeply examine the readings in all of my graduate classes.

For my undergraduate students, I find that quickwrites work very well at the beginning for each class on the topic presented. I like to use this technique to elicit the gut reactions of students and immediately read and hear what they have to say regarding the issue.

As a professor, I admit to being lecture heavy. The 10-2 lecture format—8 minutes of lecture and experience and sharing for 2 minutes—has helped me keep my lectures more engaging. The high engagement strategies of WICOR are now embedded into each of my lectures, regardless of the audience, participants, or students.

For my final piece of advice, I recommend that each educator using AVID techniques needs to attend an AVID SI. Yes, it is expensive for many stressed university budgets, but as part of the faculty, I learned a tremendous amount of information in a very short time. It is a worthwhile investment for faculty development.

ADDING VALUE IN THE COURSE
FACULTY PERSPECTIVE: DR. ZHAOMIN HE

In Fall 2011, I first heard about plans to bring AHE. I was a third-year doctoral student in educational psychology and Dr. Valle's graduate assistant. Therefore, I was "recruited" as a site team member and participated in all of the site team planning meetings, professional development workshops, the AVID SI, and other activities we did with the university and public school community.

When we started the AVID First Year Seminar in Fall 2012, I attended IS 1102 as a teaching assistant as Dr. Valle taught the class. At the same time, I was teaching Tech Transfer Acceleration Program (TTAP) Academic Skills (IS 1101) to students transferring from South Plains Community College.

Connecting with AVID

I think AHE and I were drawn to each other. Before I was "naturally" recruited for the AHE grant project, I was already working as an AVID tutor at Monterey High School within Lubbock ISD. It was another "accidental" situation. I was taking the Advanced Educational Psychology class in the Spring 2011 and the professor required that each of us find a student and conduct an intervention plan. To complete this assignment, I talked with a classmate who was the Lubbock ISD Director for AVID. I attended the tutor-training workshop and immediately fell in love with AVID. Every academic strategy introduced by AVID made so much sense to me because I could easily recognize the educational psychology rationales behind each of them! Throughout that semester, I went to the AVID class two or three times a week, interacted with the students, and wrote logs for my class assignment. The assignment was one of the most enjoyable course assignments I did, and through it, I found AVID a solid platform for the theories and models I had learned in my program.

Relating to the Strategies

Being included on the AVID leadership site team was a happy marriage for me. All of the AHE strategies presented were solidly theory-based. I was watching how the cognitive, motivational, and developmental theories work when I sat in the AVID professional development workshops. Essential topics such as Cornell note-taking, Costa's Levels of Thinking, and academic reading, or the more advanced strategies such as Writing to Learn, Socratic Seminar, and Philosophical Chairs were powerful. My strategy repertoire expanded fast. As a third year educational psychology doctoral student, I was quite concerned about my development in the program as it was heavily theoretically orientated. I felt as though I had checks in my pocket but was not able to cash them to buy what I needed. In this sense, AVID met my needs.

Also, these success strategies worked nicely together within the WICOR model, distinctively separating the AVID system from isolated and simple classroom skills. What I find really powerful about AVID is that this program is firmly rooted in the most essential areas of effective learning and teaching, i.e., WICOR, or Writing,

"While not necessary, previous experience with AVID and knowledge of the educational pipeline allows site team members to better perform on the team."

Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading. Not only are the AVID strategies solidly theory-based, but also they are evidence-based, which make them indeed SUCCESS strategies. While AVID is often compared with developmental programs, it is actually a very rigorous, yet substantially supportive system. I know that AVID in high school requires students to take at least one rigorous course. Although there was no one-size manual for AHE, one of the ways we pushed our students was through a scholarship workshop. We invited the representative from the scholarship office, introduced internal and external resources available, and most importantly, we walked our students through the elements of a successful application essay. We had them put together a rough draft to take away with them at the end of the workshop.

As a 100% believer and follower of AVID, I quickly learned the strategies; I applied them in my own learning and working, and even developed new tools. I especially love Costa's Levels of Thinking and academic reading. Yet, my application was more conceptual because graduate-level reading requires more abstract and critical thinking. With the awareness of different levels of inquiry and the multiple steps of reading, I found myself a more conscious reader and better processed the information on different levels at different time points. It was really inspiring to see myself become more insightful, critical, yet remain practical and specific with the application of these strategies. Once the AVID strategies are internalized, it is only natural to go beyond the strategies and come up with new ideas. For example, the name tent was a quite effective ice-breaking tool, which was also often used by AVID trainers as an instant comment and feedback tool at the AVID SIs. When I decided to use the name tent, I developed the inside into a self-monitoring table asking students to list what they thought they had learned, what questions they had, as well as to rate their performance at each meeting on a five-point Likert Scale, thus, making the name tent an informative assessment tool.

Messages:
- There are multiple ways that AHE can stay rigorous and thus distinguish itself from any

existing similar programs. A scholarship writing workshop is an effective option to incorporate for a first-year seminar.

- WICOR strategies not only work for undergraduate-level learning and teaching, but they also work on the graduate level, especially the conceptual application.
- The WICOR strategies are powerful and effective tools that are both theory- and evidence-based. While serving the general student population, AHE should particularly find its way into the college of education as a strategy for all pre-service teachers.

Supporting Critical Thinking Beyond College

At this point, I felt prepared to begin instructing as I was fully equipped with WICOR strategies and an AVID mindset that I picked up from firsthand experience (i.e., rigorous expectation plus substantial support with no judgment). The classes I taught were pure pleasure except for the two, oversized TTAP classes with 35 students in each section. Generally speaking, both my students and I were satisfied during the class and confident afterward because WICOR strategies were very clearly and specifically prepared and presented. This greatly facilitated the learning and transferring processes. However, I think there is a caveat for AHE. Feedback from some students indicated that the WICOR strategies are repetitive at this level because students may have already established their learning skills. Although the strategies are good and effective, time spent learning what they already know did appear wasteful.

> **"College of Education graduate assistants are great candidates to be included in the [AVID] site team."**

Because I was acquainted with the AVID tutorial in high school, I tried to adapt the teaching materials to the higher-education context by relating the strategies to students and making the content more challenging. For example, Costa's Levels of Thinking was well received by my students. Given the significant role of critical thinking in higher education, we introduced the strategy with a discussion on critical thinking and, thus, made a very strong rationale for it. We talked about what defines critical thinking (e.g., identify one power word in the definition and explain why), why one should

think critically (e.g., if they ran a business, what kind of employee they would want to use and what not), and what critical thinking means to them in their learning (e.g., when preparing a test) and future career (e.g., evaluation for decision making). It was just amazing to see a room of students seriously use their mind power to take their inquiries from one level to another to gain better understanding of a topic! As an educator, I was really impressed by how WICOR strategies function as high engagement tools when they really make sense for students' learning mechanisms.

At TTU, we did not limit ourselves in sharing AHE goodies only in the classrooms but we also reached out to the larger community. All of the tutors at the University Learning Center were AVID-trained. The one-hour session on ACT and SAT tests Dr. Valle presented at the Native American Summer Bridge Institute in Summer 2012 turned into a four-day (one hour per day) AVID class highlighting a college-going aspiration the next year. We introduced Cornell notes, Costa's Levels of Thinking, critical reading, and did a writing and public speaking project with the class. The high school students picked these sessions as their favorites!

> **"AHE is an 'everyone wins' system and project. Advocating this can help to avoid unnecessary doubts and win support from across the campus."**

In Spring 2012 at a Mother-Daughter Day event, Dr. Valle and Dr. Jacob presented Cornell notes featuring the topic of college choices. We used the classic AVID "I Am Poem" activity and had the mothers and daughters engaged and interacting with each other. Moreover, a West-Texas Pipeline (Lubbock ISD) meeting was led by AVID at TTU in which each level shared information and resources by showcasing their work, recognizing effective practices, and identifying challenges. Dr. Valle and I also attended the career fair at Coronado High School (Lubbock ISD) representing AVID at TTU. It has been pleasant to recall all the academic experiences I had with AHE at TTU!

Messages:
- Class size has an influence on effectiveness in general and AVID classes are no exception. Class sizes should be taken into

consideration with careful planning to make expected impacts.

- *Calibrating the existing WICOR system to higher education level is key to successful AHE programs. Educators must contextualize the strategies and use subject matter materials to make the class content more challenging and to help to better present the strategies and engage students.*

- *Given the leading role of high education, AHE can benefit the community beyond the campus through various activities such as college experience camps and workshops. In particular, AHE at top of the education pipeline has a great impact on gathering resources and benefiting the larger community.*

- *Inviting people from existing support programs will be a great help during the implementation of AVID on campus.*

As a participant/observer, I see AHE as a great system for creating win-win situations for all parties involved. First of all, students, as the ultimate benefiters, win by becoming better learners. The university, represented by the administrators, wins fame and further establishes itself by providing higher quality educational services. Instructors win with an expanded repertoire of effective and highly engaging strategies. The community wins by benefiting from leadership and having access to more resources from the university. As for myself, more than two years experience with AVID has made me a better learner, teacher, team member, and researcher. I think there is no better testimony than a secured faculty position for a doctoral student before graduation; today I am a university professor who has AVID skills.

CRUMBLING SILOS IN LUBBOCK COMMUNITY
EDUCATION PARTNER: DR. BEVERLY FINCH, LUBBOCK ISD

Terms such as "community of learners," "college-ready culture," and "school family" have long been part of the

AVID vernacular. For years, however, AVID in West Texas existed in academic silos, encapsulated in a small number of the region's secondary schools. Each AVID high school and middle school harvested its own college-ready crop of students. AVID tutors were difficult to find, college partnerships and resources depended on solely the connections previously established by the AVID site coordinator/AVID elective teacher, and recruitment of local AVID students by TTU or other local four-year colleges seemed minimal, at best. One year, I actually had more students recruited by and ultimately attend The University of Texas at Austin than our backyard institution of higher learning, TTU.

In less than four years, the silos have all but crumbled. TTU students and faculty partner with our public schools, recruit our students, and offer an array of academic and extracurricular opportunities for our students and educators. AHE at TTU and its leadership have cultivated a vibrant, collaborative community of learners that consistently includes K–12 grade students and educators in Lubbock, Tahoka, Slaton, and surrounding communities. What started as an initiative at TTU to support undergraduate students has proliferated into an amazing West Texas extended AVID family that works together to build and support the college- and career-ready system from all perspectives: TTU AHE touches kindergarten classrooms; fifth-grade math classrooms; secondary tutorial groups; combined tutor training sessions for peer tutors who work with TTU engineering and pre-med students; public school third- through twelfth-grade students; and research studies by doctoral students. TTU and Lubbock ISD have truly opened doors for K–20 educators and students to work together to connect, collaborate, and create multiple networks of opportunity.

What started as a partnership between TTU AHE site team leaders and Lubbock ISD, AVID has truly diminished the drought of a college-ready collaborative partnership between TTU and our elementary and secondary AVID schools. The AVID family now extends from K–20 and beyond. TTU supports our students, parents, and faculty, and, in turn, LISD supports TTU students and faculty.

A sampling of a few events may perhaps tell the story of the AVID family transformation that began in 2011.

- *Creation of AHE Liaison, Office of Academic Enrichment in TTU Division of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement. The graduate assistant who works in this office has been an AVID student and an AVID tutor in Lubbock ISD. This office specifically works with TTU AHE and provides resources and support for all of our Lubbock ISD AVID students.*

- *Marissa Gutierrez, AVID tutor and AVID student (both secondary and TTU) has served on the Monterey High School site team, the Lubbock ISD AVID Academic Coach Board, and co-presented with Dr. Valle, TTU, and Dr. Finch, Lubbock ISD, at the AVID National Conference and the Engagement Scholarship Consortium's 14th Annual Conference at TTU on "Building the AVID P-20 Pipeline: Lubbock ISD and TTU College Readiness System." Ms. Gutierrez and Dr. Valle were both chosen to speak at a 2014 AVID SIs.*

- *AVID tutor trainings are attended by area educators and AVID tutors. TTU has hosted the training and both university AVID tutors and Lubbock ISD AVID tutors work together to train together. Veteran Lubbock ISD tutors model strategies for TTU tutors and faculty, and Lubbock ISD faculty facilitates training for TTU staff.*

- *AHE TTU and Lubbock ISD have hosted several West Texas AVID working lunches. University faculty, tutors, and students participate in this collaborative networking event.*

- *TTU and Lubbock ISD work together to build community and increase the number of students who are college- and career-ready in East Lubbock through the East Lubbock Promise Neighborhood Grant. AVID tutors work with AVID students during tutorials and with all students who need help after school and during Saturday School. AVID tutors also work closely with teachers at Ervin Elementary during math and science classes to offer additional opportunities for success in fourth and fifth grade classrooms.*

- *For Joan Y. Ervin Elementary, TTU hosted the preschool and fifth grade graduation in the Allen Theatre. Students walked across stage as parents and loved ones came to the campus in a "sneak peek" of what may be college graduation a few years down the road.*

- *Each year, TTU hosts a districtwide AVID Family Night on the TTU campus. Parents, students, educators, and tutors come together to celebrate the journey of college readiness. Elementary students present certificates to graduating high school AVID seniors; students from each of the district's AVID elementary, middle, and high schools share learning experiences that helped them move closer to their goal of preparing to be a successful college graduate. TTU students and/or AVID tutors help coordinate the event and intermingle among our community of learners.*

- *Mentorship and career and academic opportunities for TTU students have rapidly increased. Academic coaches not only tutor in our AVID elective classes, they also tutor after school, during Saturday School, and in elementary classrooms. They are photographers, speakers, role models, mentors, reporters, web designers, technicians, and campus leaders.*

- *They form close relationships with teachers, administrators, and their peers as they serve at schools. Our TTU AVID academic coaches become better students themselves. They integrate the academic habits of practice into their own school journey. Our academic coaches graduate from college. Many are first generation students. Many decide to continue work in education after graduation because of their positive experiences in the schools. Many continue relationships with the teachers and administrators who have served as mentors, cheerleaders, and a network of support while the TTU students studied and worked in Lubbock. This reciprocal relationship mutually benefits the K–12 students and the college students.*

So, AHE parallels AVID at the secondary schools. It truly is about providing relationships and experiences that help students succeed in a rigorous academic environment. Creating a K–20 pipeline that connects students and educators at all levels provides an

amazing collaborative community of learners who nurture and support the next generation of leaders.

FINAL THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AHE has grown and evolved at TTU during the past three years. The inclusion of faculty partners, offering tutorial trainings to a broader audience, and forming partnerships with local K–12 AVID schools and the greater community has increased the value of AHE for stakeholders involved.

> **"We know anything worth doing takes work, and working to implement AHE at TTU has been an undertaking well worth taking."**

Our situation is unique, our geography and university context play a huge role in how AHE is delivered and sustained. We have learned to offer tutoring to a wider audience of tutors. Our partnership with AVID in K–12 schools has connected college and high school students through academic tutoring. Families and children are welcomed to the university in the name of college readiness and AVID.

University faculty have applied strategies into content areas courses and more importantly, into graduate courses. The partnership across campus and the community helped sustain AHE on campus and has now institutionalized it. We set out to work with a few sections with small class numbers to establish relationships and dig deeper with our students. The opportunities for learning and professional development have improved teaching and provided cognitive skills that allow faculty move beyond a "sit-and-get" 90-minute lecture. Each team member has provided recommendations and examples of spaces where AHE has had an impact.

UPDATE: 2014 AND BEYOND

Since the implementation in 2011 on the TTU campus, AHE has further evolved. The following updates briefly describe the current and near future actions on campus involving AVID/AHE. One of the significant changes was the placement of AVID/AHE in a different division than when it was initially implemented in 2011.

"We have been able to utilize AVID to assist the wraparound services that are offered by three other units within the Division of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement. This acquisition will help us offer students more academic tutoring sessions and improve their study skills," according to Dr. Paul Frazier, Assistant Vice President, Division of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement.

LEVERAGING AVID STRATEGIES FOR ENGINEERING
CAMPUS VIEW: JOHN RIVERA, ACADEMIC DEAN

For the Spring 2015 semester, AVID tutor training will focus on the Statistics course (ME 2301). This course was identified by the Office of the Provost as showing higher than expected failure rates. Meetings are being held to leverage the knowledge from a well-experienced faculty member who will recommend problem sets that present challenges to learning for students.

According to Assistant Academic Dean John Rivera in the College of Engineering, one class for this course will be piloted next spring semester with an AVID-trained tutor paired with a Mechanical Engineering faculty member who is teaching the course for the first time. "The goal is to designate future engineering courses as AVID learning courses by the instructor employing WICOR techniques into the course supported with AVID-trained tutors," he comments.

Also for the Spring 2015 semester, plans will include the use of AVID tools (Cornell notes, critical reading, organized binders with learning logs) through the Academic Recovery workshops for those engineering students on engineering probation. Last academic year, there were 451 students on engineering probation. Dean Rivera adds, "we plan to use AVID-trained tutors to work with the students in weekly sessions to motivate students to use AVID tools."

MOVING FORWARD
CAMPUS PERSPECTIVE: KASAUNDRA GARCIA

> "The majority of the students we serve are underserved and economically disadvantaged. I have been eager to add AVID support since I have taken this position because I myself am a first-generation graduate, and I also come from an

economically disadvantaged background," observes Kasaundra Garcia, Unit Coordinator of the Office of Academic Enrichment and TTU's current AHE Liaison. She became the liaison in March 2014.

"I know that my experiences and my education are an asset to creating the optimal learning environment for other students who take on the challenges faced as underserved students. My relationships with my students are key to identifying barriers to higher education attainment and to developing the skills that enable them to deal effectively with the academic cultural and the financial challenges that college creates," she adds.

"The connections I have with my students create an inclusive environment and empower them to achieve self-awareness of their potential and to recognize their responsibility to work towards their own success."

CAMPUS PERSPECTIVE: JESSE JALOMO, MANAGING DIRECTOR, UPWARD BOUND

Beginning in the Summer 2015, a course based on AVID learning strategies and WICOR will be offered to Upward Bound students from area (LISD) schools, grades 9–12. This course will supplement the content-based courses concurrently offered during a five-week period between June and August. Students will live in a residence hall on campus to experience the academic culture in preparation for college.

This need for a learning skills course grew from student experiences in the Summer of 2014 when 25 out of the 65 Upward Bound students (38%) did not successfully pass the TSI pre-test which assesses college readiness.