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ELIMINATING THE DETRIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF POVERTY TO PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS

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The culture of community colleges has shifted and all higher educational institutions are encountering new students with new problems. The new college students bring with them barriers that interfere with their much needed success to better their future and our country as a whole. If we can find ways to break down those barriers and help students succeed we can see students and our communities thrive. One of the major barriers we have encountered is poverty. Poverty brings about a variety of issues that limit the success of student in college such as food and home insecurity, inexperience with college ideology, unawareness of ways to help financially with school and life and lack of support. Amarillo College has become part of a "No Excuses University" to help our students remove barriers to obtain success. Some of the initiatives include coaches and champions mentoring program, addition of an advocacy center which includes multi-campus supply pantries, hands on FAFSA events on the college campus as well as in the high schools in the community and multiple partnerships that solidify our transfer students' pathways onto four year universities. One of major changes here at Amarillo College that has yielded the highest rates of success is the change to eight week courses. Author has addressed mental and legal service issues by developing an Amarillo College Counseling Center and legal aid center which is free to students. She also established an on campus affordable daycare center for students to take their kids while they attend class. Each initiative that they have put forth has shown promise and our success rates have increased. The next step would be to find out which of the initiatives is the true barrier breaker in order to stream line our approach to promoting optimal student success.

BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Rodriguez earned her PhD from Texas Christian University with guidance from some of her mentors Dr Charles Lord, Dr Steven Cole, Dr Charles Bond and Dr Donald Dansereau. After graduation she returned home to Amarillo, TX and became the district director of the Panhandle MDA raising funds and educating communities about muscular dystrophy. After five years of fundraising, he decided to go back to middle school teaching and coaching in order to influence growing adolescents. After having kids of her own, she accepted her current position at Amarillo College. Currently she is the program coordinator for the Behavioral and Social Sciences Department at Amarillo Community College. She has been involved in pilot sessions for many of the poverty and students' success missions. She is passionate not only about teaching students, but making sure they have a stable foundation to build successful lives.

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