



## CENTRAL VALLEY HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

### HISTORICAL SUMMARY

#### **Need and Purpose**

The Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC) is one of the largest of its type in California. All members are college and university CEOs and are committed to pursuing regional initiatives that focus on better servicing students from access to completion.

With support from membership dues, community, and advocacy partners, we continue to inform, engage, and sustain efforts to promote higher education solutions. We know that many of our graduates will be the first in their families to complete higher education thus breaking the cycle of poverty that exists in our region.

The organization's history in building cooperation and collaboration among member institutions is evidenced by the ongoing engagement in inter-segmental, coordinated approaches to promoting higher education solutions. The CVHEC is a non-profit public benefit, 501C3 Corporation that operates under the auspices of the Fresno State Foundation, founded by Fresno State President, John D. Welty in 2001.

#### **CVHEC Goals and Objectives**

1. Increasing college participation rates among student populations that historically have had low college-going rates.
2. Providing college access information and motivation to Valley residents; especially those that perceive college as "out of reach."
3. Collaborating with other organizations that work to achieve these same goals.
4. Supporting student success initiatives.

#### **History:**

The Central Valley Higher Education Consortium received a planning grant from the James Irvine foundation for \$110,000 in August, 2000 and hired a consultant to prepare the original action plan. In April 2001, the action plan was adopted by the Consortium's presidents of 18 accredited public and non-profit colleges and universities in the 10

county region. In September, 2001 the Consortium held its first two-day retreat at Harris Ranch to focus on “developing a college going culture.” In December, 2001, the Consortium was awarded \$850,000 from the James Irvine Foundation for a two-year implementation grant. In October, 2002, the Consortium held its second two-day retreat focusing on ways to improve transfer rates. In addition to those retreats, the Consortium hired an Associate Director, and Assistant, and formed sub-committees (6). In 2002, the Consortium was incorporated as a non-profit 501c3 organization.

Since 2000, the Consortium has experienced growth. Membership has grown from 18 to 27 institutions of higher education:

### **Consortium Mission:**

We unite to increase higher education participation and success in the Central Valley.

### **Vision:**

Our vision is to make the Central Valley the state leader in higher education attainment, resulting in an enhanced [quality of life](#) and economic vitality for Valley residents. We want everyone to know that the Central Valley is the premier place to get a quality education.

### **CVHEC made a commitment to investing in the future of the Central Valley:**

The Central Valley has great needs in improving [employment](#) rates, education attainment, income level, and overall quality of life for its rapidly growing and increasingly diverse population. Educational attainment levels in the region fall significantly below the state’s average. CVHEC is investing in education as part of a long-term solution to the problems of unemployment, poverty, crime, and lack of economic development. Together, our 27 higher education leaders are making a positive impact on the educational achievement of the region. This, in turn, will impact the economy and availability of skilled workers needed to grow the economy.

### **Consortium Goals:**

1. Building and nurturing a college-going culture in which a higher percentage of our Valley residents obtain associate’s and bachelor’s degrees.
2. Enhancing cooperation between two-year and four-year institutions to increase the student transfer rate.
3. Establishing an effective policy voice and advocacy for higher education in the Central Valley.

4. Encouraging Valley [higher education institutions](#) to provide programs meeting the workforce preparation needs of Valley employers.
5. Supporting the effectiveness of our member institutions through appropriate collaborative initiatives including professional development and data collection and analysis.

## **Past Projects and Initiatives:**

### **College: Making it Happen**

2002- 2007 CVHEC took the lead on coordinating the Central Valley's College: Making It Happen Program. Aimed at middle school students, their families, and educators, the program is designed to communicate the importance of early academic preparation and financial planning. This event offered information and training to K-12 teachers, counselors, administrators, and college and university staff. Representatives from our college and university affiliates, as well as volunteers from local high schools, spoke on the following topics:

- The benefits of a college education
- College preparation for middle school students
- [Paying for college](#)
- Types of colleges and universities
- Academic resources and organizations
- [Financial aid](#) and scholarship resources and organizations; College: Making It Happen Presentation ([PDF in English](#) | [PDF in Spanish](#))

### **2007 – 2010 The College Place:**

- Thousands of students were served with information and resources such as college planning, college searching, goal-setting, financial aid, cash for college workshops, and more. The Center was placed in the Manchester Mall in Fresno, was housed with Fresno City College's Manchester Educational Resource Center. Albert Valencia, CSU, Fresno professor was the lead faculty advisor and recruited four interns, known as college coaches, who served through the fall semester. The interns enrolled in the M.A. program and conducting their counseling internships as the Center and receiving a stipend of \$1,500 to help off-set their college expenses. The College Place attracted grant funding from the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley in the amount of \$200,000 to jumpstart the services in 2007. The City of Fresno invested \$100,000, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation granted \$50,000, and the Rotary Club of Fresno granted \$1,600.00. Services included:

- Setting vocational training and higher education goals
- Explore interests
- Create a college-going plan
- Explore vocational training options/certificate programs
- Degree / Major exploration
- Scholarship exploration
- Housing Options
- On-campus services and programs (i.e. Re-entry, Educational Opportunities Program, etc.)
- Early awareness activities
- Guide to review Central Valley college / university resources
- Connect with college / universities admission advisors and financial aid counselors
- Financing a college education, Financial aid resources
- Navigating the community college system and transfer process and the development of a premier college going website: [www.CollegeNext.org](http://www.CollegeNext.org).

Results: 1,000 youths per year given college going information and completed in-take form 750 students completed a college/career coaching plan 365 students attended follow-up sessions 550 completed college applications. The College Place model has been adopted by the Mayor of Fresno with Education Advisors from the Adult Education Task Force, titled "Learn to Earn Fresno." 10 Consortium institutions are currently participating in the initiative.

### **Hispanic Youth Symposium**

The aim is to Increase college participation rates among student populations that historically have had low college. Every summer since 2006-2011 CVHEC partnered with the Hispanic College Fund to co-host a four day, three night program which has brought over 600 Central Valley high school sophomores and juniors to Fresno State to experience college life, learn how to prepare for a professional career, get involved in community service, and meet role models and leaders from thriving businesses and industries. During the event, students compete for [scholarships](#) in the following contest areas: speech, art, dance, and "issues to action." The event is funded by grants and donations by Wells Fargo, Kaiser Permanente Hospital, and other partners. Scholarships won at the event competitions, in the amount of \$15,000 per event, helped many students pay for college tuition. This program has evolved to a College Admission Boot Camp/Ambassadors for College Opportunity Initiative which was recently funded by the Fresno Regional Foundation.

### **Why Access Matters**

The Consortium convened researchers from members institutions 2007-2008 to examine college access trends, issues, barriers, and overall data and produced and published a report in 2008. This research/data report provides higher education and its stakeholders a deeper, more specific understanding of the college-going trends in the Central Valley, and the data necessary for monitoring selected indicators in college

access, transfer, and workforce preparation. For the full report, please see [www.collegenext.org](http://www.collegenext.org)

## **Cash for College**

From 2006- 2010, as a result of low Cal-grant participation (only 28.1 of eligible students applied) CVHEC partnered with the Student Aid Commission on regional workshops series for students and parents to attend. Over 20 workshops were hosted at CVHEC member institutions, shopping malls, and community agencies January 2006 – February 28, 2006.

## **Workforce Investment Act (WIA Grant)**

In December 2009, CVHEC teamed up with the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley in a WIA grant that assisted Valley high schools and colleges in providing training and awareness on the workforce needs in the Valley as well as provide workforce preparation initiatives. CVHEC was granted \$25,000 for 2010 and \$25,000 for 2011 as a part of a subcontract. CVHEC was responsible for three deliverables related to economic development.

## **Youth Ambassadors for College Opportunity**

This joint effort between CVHEC, Advanced Placement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Fresno Pacific University trained high school students as college advocates in four local high schools: Hoover High School, Washington Union High School, El Diamante High School, and Riverdale High School. Using the “near peer” model, college students mentored high school students on how to develop a college-going culture within their high school community and neighborhood. More than 5,000 high school sophomores per year received [college information](#) through the Youth Ambassador project. This program will be continued beginning winter, 2014, funded by the Fresno Regional Foundation.

## **The CVHEC Degree Completion Initiative**

Ensuring Central Valley students’ success in College Completion is an effort all of our CVHEC members; public, private, California State University, and UC take very seriously. With support from membership dues and community partners, we have continued to [inform](#), [engage](#), and [sustain](#) efforts to promote higher education options and become a leader in the state in [college degree completion](#). We have not lost sight of the fact that many of our graduates will be the first in their families to complete higher education and thus breaking a cycle of poverty that exists in our region.

In 2010, with all of our specifically, college and university presidents, we collectively engaged in A Degree Completion Summit at the Tenaya Lodge near Yosemite emphasizing college degree attainment which led to collaborative agreements and

transfer agreements in line with SB1440. Work groups continue to engage with each other and dialogue continues with state leaders in government and business.

## **Current CVHEC Initiatives**

The Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC) continues to lend support and to actively advocate for numerous programs, policies, resources, initiatives and legislation, which can serve to improve and increase education access and success rates, including the following:

### **C6 College Readiness Supported by the California Education Policy Fund (CEPF)**

Central California Community Colleges Committed to Change (C6 Consortium), a sub group of the CVHEC identified **College Readiness** as a top priority the past couple of years. With funding support from the California Education Policy Fund, (CEPF), the Consortium invested in the capacity building of region-wide Standards and Accountability that better prepare students to “be ready” and to succeed in college from the first assessment/placement test through graduation. The first priority is Assessment/Placement. As a result CVHEC Faculty Leaders have developed a streamlined, **common assessment blue print** that will serve to revolutionize testing for students in the Central Valley region. By spring, 2014, the assessment will be piloted by students. The goal is to gain approval of the test by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s office for implementation. C-6 efforts have exceeded beyond Common Assessment work to include strategies around aligning K-14 curriculum and “Deeper Learning.”

### **Workforce Initiative**

The C-6 Consortium efforts, a sub-group of CVHEC established a team of faculty experts that are tackling innovative approaches and bold responses to the Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Act/Community College and Career Training (TAA/CCCT) grant solicitation. The recent TAA/CCCT award marks an unprecedented opportunity for our region to develop accelerated, intensive programs of study so students earn a degree or credential of value in a reasonable amount of time, enabling them to enter the workforce of critical industries with growing occupational demand in an accelerated timeframe. This project is grounded in Valley expertise and input from regional employers and county Workforce Investment Boards which will transform the design, structure and delivery of education at 10 California Community Colleges. Stakeholder Organizations are: County Workforce Investment Boards, CA Department of Mental Health, Northern CA Hospital California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Council, Psychiatric Technicians Union, local hospitals, California Prison Health Care Services, California Employment and Economic Development. Three targeted areas are the focus: Alternative Energy, Ag Manufacturing Food Processing, and Healthcare. The Board believes that this

experience and research-based project can be replicated as a state and national model.

## **College Admission Boot Camp/Youth Ambassadors for College Opportunity**

The Fresno Regional Foundation Grant is funding the recruitment and education of 75 high school students (designated to be first-generation prospective college-goers and from working poor families) from Tulare County to prepare for the [college application](#) and admission process. Specific activities include College Knowledge Boot Camp, a 3-day program, hosted at a university campus that prepares students for the increasingly competitive college admission process. The students will be trained as College Opportunity Ambassadors to empower their high school peers to attend college.

## **Advocacy/Policy**

Current policy experiments, that include common assessment (AB 743) will allow state officials to shed light on the lack of college persistence and attainment in our region. Transfer Initiatives continue to be a priority for the Consortium: SB 1440, SB 440 are two that all members have endorsed more recently working with the Campaign for College Opportunity.

In the past, Consortium leaders supported the newest University of California campus via a joint Resolution; a regional College Awareness month; AB 178 Incentives for College Readiness, SB 890 Early Commitment Act.

Our members will continue to support appropriate collaborative initiatives and provide an effective policy voice for our region as part of our commitment to increasing college attainment.

## **Conclusion**

While we have much to celebrate, we still have much to accomplish in this vast region. Too many of our residents are not pursuing the plentiful opportunities for higher education that our regional institutions offer. Therefore, our mission continues that we unite to increase higher education participation and success in the Central Valley.

As we engage in strategic planning this fall, we will continue to fine-tune programs geared toward improving education attainment levels and collaborating on refining systems and protocols that make college access and completion more achievable for

more Valley students. By accomplishing our goals, the Consortium will improve the quality of life for more residents in the Central Valley through higher education.

For more information on the Consortium: [www.collegenext.org](http://www.collegenext.org).