

White House lauds Cal Poly Pomona Unified for TRANSFERmation program

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By Monica Rodriguez

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POMONA >> The White House has recognized Cal Poly Pomona and Pomona Unified School District for developing a partnership that will assist Latino youth in entering and completing college, the district announced.

The Pomona TRANSFERmation program came about as a result of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics' call to action, encouraging public, private and nonprofit groups to make commitments that give Latinos greater access to higher education,

"These high-impact, long-term commitments to action will make a meaningful and quantifiable contribution to increase and support education outcomes for Latinos, cradle-to-career," according to the U.S. Department of Education's website.

The TRANSFERmation program grew out of the Poly Transfer program, which was established to help students make the transition to Cal Poly, said Terri Gomez, director of Poly Transfer and interim associated dean of Cal Poly's College of Education and Integrative Studies.

Data shows the program has seen transfer students succeed but more could be done, Gomez said.

"If we want to have more impact, particularly in our community, we have to get to (students) earlier," she said.

Gomez, who had been talking with Cal Poly Pomona President Soraya M. Coley about expanding Poly Transfer into Pomona Unified, began working with Pomona Unified Superintendent Richard Martinez.

TRANSFERmation, which is expected to launch sometime in December or January, will offer Pomona Unified students and their parents tools that will help district graduates enter and succeed at two- and four-year colleges and universities.

Often first-generation Latino students are seen as youth who have problems instead of focusing on their strengths, such as a strong work ethic, valuing education and viewing it as a “as a path to success,” Gomez said.

Those working with underrepresented students must look at their strengths “instead of seeing students as kids that need to be fixed or are lacking because the only thing they are lacking is an opportunity,” she said.

TRANSFERmation includes several components, including working with foster youth, parental involvement for both English speakers and Spanish speakers, financial aid and housing assistance. Elementary and middle school students also will be part of the program. They will have opportunities to visit Cal Poly where they can begin to see college is an option for them, Gomez said.

The new program will be supported with funding from the university, a grant from the Cal State University system’s Office of the Chancellor and with funding for transportation from Pomona Unified, Gomez said.

However, more funding will be needed.

“We want to go after grants, significant grants,” she said.

The partnerships Pomona Unified has established with local universities, community organizations and parents are key to students’ success, Superintendent Martinez said in a statement.

“It’s through important partnerships such as the one we have with Cal Poly Pomona that we are able to offer tremendous educational opportunities to our students and support them in their academic, professional and personal endeavors,” Martinez said.

Earlier this year, Martinez was recognized at the White House for increasing Pomona Unified schools’ student achievement and increasing access to technology.

“This truly is a transformative initiative that will change the lives of our first-generation and underrepresented Latino students, who often face challenges to success, and also supports our efforts to provide the children of this community with a high-quality education,” Martinez said.