SOUTHWEST TEXAS JUNIOR COLLEGE: TRANSFORMATION ON THE BORDER

Christopher James Thomas, B.A., M.Ed.

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APPROVED:

Stephen Katsinas, Major Professor
John Anthony, Committee Member
William Wenrich, Committee Member
Ronald Newsom, Program Coordinator for Higher Education and Interim Chair of the Department of Counseling, Development and Higher Education
M. Jean Keller, Dean of the College of Education
Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies
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This study sought to identify components of the institutional transformation of Southwest Texas Junior College from its participation in the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). The RCCI was centered on increasing access to educational opportunities and regional economic development in four historically poor regions of the United States. It was felt that this two-pronged approach to increase access and economic development would ameliorate poverty and provide opportunity. The pilot colleges were chosen from Appalachia, Delta South, Northern Plains (Tribal colleges), and the Southwest. Southwest Texas Junior College in the southwest border region of Texas and Mexico was chosen in 1994 as one of nine pilot college participants in the Ford Foundation project.

Documentation of the college’s characteristics were conducted during the 1994 and 1995 preliminary visits by Stephen G. Katsinas at the request of the Ford Foundation to find suitable rural community colleges in historically distressed areas of the United States to be invited to participate in RCCI. Follow-up site visits were conducted by Christopher Thomas in 2002, 2004, and 2005. Data was collected during all site visits by open-ended questionnaires, interviews, content analysis of documents, and observation. Extended site visits and living in the college’s residence halls increased the researcher’s knowledge of the region, the college, its faculty, staff, and students.

Results from the study indicated Southwest Texas Junior College has undergone substantial institutional transformation as a result of its participation in RCCI. The College increased access in all eleven counties to students in its state-assigned service delivery area
through increased relationships with twenty-two area high schools, the extensive expansion of curriculum and permanent facilities at its branch campuses in Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and Crystal City, increases in its adult basic education programs, increases in its technical training programs, and by increasing its workforce training programs. The college has also increased its regional economic development by assuming a leadership role in the region for economic development activities and by increasing its use of federal, state, and local grant opportunities. The Middle Rio Grande’s recognition by the federal government as a Rural Enterprise Zone (the Futuro Proposal) and its participation in the Lumina Grant Project are further demonstrations of its success at increasing regional economic development. Addition documentation and research on this institution and this region are warranted and suggested as this area’s population projections continue to show sharp increases.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people for their guidance and support in this endeavor. First I would like to thank my major professor Dr. Stephen G. Katsinas, or as he is known to me and many others, Dr. K. Without your commitment to rural community colleges this dissertation would have never taken place. Also, I am thankful of the support provided to me by the Bill J. Priest Center at the University of North Texas as it greatly contributed to this work.

I would also like to give a very sincere thank you Southwest Texas Junior College, its administration, and especially President Ismael Sosa, for going above and beyond in support of this work. It must also be said that this work would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of SWTJC's Board of Trustees, and its President, Rodolfo Flores. Their openness with their data, their facilities, and their hearts allowed me to see inside their institution. I would like to say thank you to my outstanding committee of Dr. John Anthony and Dr. William Wenrich, whose lives of leadership and excellence are shining examples for me to aspire. I want to extend a thank you to Dr. Chuck Fluharty for his encouragement of this work, and his continued dedication to helping to improve the lives of rural Americans everywhere.

I want to say thank you to my parents, Jim and Margie Thomas. Your love and support give me strength everyday and you always remain close to my heart. Finally, I must give a very special thank you to my loving and pregnant wife Melissa. My life is better because you are in it. I am most grateful now that this project has been completed so we can change our “dissertation room” into a nursery and begin the even better challenge of raising our first child.
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PREFACE

This study employed a qualitative and narrative approach because it allows for the “richness” of the story of SWTJC’s transformation to be documented. I chose both this topic and style because I want to strengthen the higher education research knowledge base, since to date extended institutional case study specifically on a rural community college has been completed and I believe Southwest Texas Junior College has a story worth being told.

It was 2001 and early fall in north Texas. The air was turning crisp and the leaves were starting to tumble down from the trees. The campus of the University of North Texas was alive, with birds, squirrels, and students all preparing themselves for the impending winter. I was a new doctoral student headed for my first scheduled meeting with the professor of my “Perspectives of Higher Education” course, Stephen G. Katsinas. Even though our class ballooned to over 30 students, Katsinas set personal meetings with each student to discuss the term paper.

We talked about my background, my passions, and what I wanted to explore in my first doctoral term paper. I expressed my interest and immersion in the work of a Kentucky poet and educator named Jesse Stuart. My father introduced me to Mr. Stuart, and I had fallen in love with Stuart’s vivid depictions of mid-twentieth century rural education in the hollows of the Appalachian Mountains. Sharing my interest in Stuart with Professor Katsinas produced a smile spread wide across his face. He asked me about community colleges generally, and more specifically rural community colleges. I laughed and had an idea of where he could be going with this line of questioning.

Previous research on the professors in the higher education program at North Texas informed me Katsinas’ area of expertise was in the community college. He shared with me his ongoing research on rural community colleges that has lasted for a large part of his professional
career. I explained my own attendance at my local community college, Lamar State College – Orange, for my freshmen year, and what a fantastic experience it had been for me. Not only was I exposed to stimulating professors who challenged me intellectually, I was able to more easily make the transition from high school to college student in a supportive and nurturing environment. I was interested in learning more about the field of community colleges and having grown up in the country have a deep love, respect and appreciation for rural America. From that time to the present day, my relationship with Professor Katsinas has grown and I feel we have both prospered.

He shared with me a project with which he had been involved with for the past eight years. As one of a handful of nationally recognized experts in rural community colleges, Katsinas had worked with the Ford Foundation, who was the underwriter of the program, in identifying potential colleges to participate in the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). This multi-million dollar program was managed from 1994 until 2003 by MDC, Inc. of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The RCCI’s goals were both to expand access and economic development. The Ford Foundation was looking for ways to use community colleges as intermediary institutions to lift up areas of persistent rural poverty in the United States. Through the rural community colleges, it was hoped that the continued decline of rural America could be stemmed. Their focus would be on four regions of the US historically plagued by desperation and poverty, low educational attainment rates, high illiteracy, and high unemployment. An analysis of all 3,031 counties in the United States performed by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and according to the 1990 census, 319 counties were identified as having severely persistent poverty. Those regions are Appalachia, Delta South, Four Corners region, and the Southwest
region of the United States. The aspirations of the RCCI program were beautiful in their simplicity, using rural community colleges to lift up the landscape of rural America.

My first paper for Professor Katsinas was a compilation paper of site notes from his visits in the 1990’s to five of the pilot colleges initially involved in the study. From these site-notes, which averaged 35 to 40 pages of double-space type each, I learned about the RCCI and about the pilot colleges in Hazard, Kentucky, Scooba, Mississippi, Uvalde, Texas, the Four Corners area of New Mexico, Arizona, and the High Plains Tribal Colleges of Montana. From this term paper, Professor Katsinas saw my desire to become more deeply involved in the project and with him. What better experience could there be for a young doctoral student than a nationally known professor offering to share his personal site visit notes on such a fascinating topic? The more I learned about the RCCI and how it had progressed from the time of Professor Katsinas’ original involvement, the more I wanted to explore the RCCI’s impact of transforming the colleges. During the following semester of Spring 2002, I began to examine one college in particular, Southwest Texas Junior College in Uvalde, Texas. My thirst for knowledge became unquenchable, the more I learned, the more engrossed I have become.

I was fascinated with SWTJC for a number of reasons. First, I had obtained my master’s degree at what was then known as Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, so there was an immediate affection for the name. Growing up with Mexican godparents, having spent time abroad in Costa Rica, and a year of substitute teaching in the majority-Hispanic San Marcos School District, helped me feel like I was beginning to gain an understanding of Hispanic culture. The College’s proximity to Denton made it the most reasonable and cost-effective RCCI college for me to personally visit. Throughout the Spring semester of 2002, Professor Katsinas and I arranged a site visit for me to go to SWTJC. It seemed like a good research project for me
at the time, having no idea it would be the beginning of a professional and personal relationship
with a college I would soon be referring to as my own.

Through the work of Professor Katsinas and Dr. Don Tomas, Associate Dean of
Instruction at SWTJC’s Del Rio Campus, a site visit was arranged with the purpose of updating
Katsinas’ 1994 study of the college. Dean Tomas made the arrangements in Uvalde and
coordinated a series of interviews with key personnel from the College on their campus,
including representatives from the Uvalde community. On May 24, 2002, I flew from Dallas to
San Antonio, and drove the approximately 130 miles west from San Antonio to Uvalde. Upon
leaving the San Antonio metropolitan area an immediate difference in the landscape was noticed.
Before long there was nothing more than a random gas station to break the view from the road.
The highway appeared endless, just like the fields and pastures that bordered the road. I passed
through several small towns and by three newly constructed prisons on the way to Uvalde. I
arrived in Uvalde at night and stayed in a local motel off the main street, US Highway 90.

I spent all day Friday in meetings with people from the college and from the region. It
was truly a “crash course” in southwest Texas, SWTJC, and the RCCI. This short trip to the
College resulted in a wealth of information. With the help of the Bill J. Priest Center for
Community College staff, I was able to both compile and compare the data gathered from the
college and address the initial research question of “what happened to the college by
participating in the RCCI project?” The official RCCI project had ended by May of 2002, but the
changes in the College and the region were hoped to last far beyond the length of SWTJC’s
involvement. By visiting the College in May of 2002, I was able to see firsthand the construction
projects, RCCI's sustainability, and the plans for the College’s future beyond the Ford
Foundation grant funding,
Professor Katsinas and I took my site visit notes and created a series of graphs showing a “before and after” snapshot of the College. We took this updated information and presented it in October of 2002 at the inaugural Rural Community College Alliance Conference “Southwest Texas Junior College: A Case Study.” In our session Katsinas spoke first about his initial involvement with the College and RCCI, and I then presented my findings. We were also fortunate to have the participation of SWTJC’s President, Ismael Sosa, to both present information and react to our presentation. From the success of this first presentation and the encouragement received from the academic community, I continued to update information on the College and created more complex charts and tables. This new information was taken to the 2nd annual RCCA conference in San Antonio in October of 2003, and “Southwest Texas Junior College: An Update” was presented. Once again we were able to have President Sosa with us as part of our presentation. Dr. Charles W. Fluharty, Director of the Rural Policy Research Institute of the Harry S. Truman School of Public Affairs at the University of Missouri –Columbia, was in attendance. Dr. Fluharty expressed his strong interest in this ongoing research, indicated that with additional work, my SWTJC study could anchor a congressional hearing on rural community colleges.

The many suggestions that resulted from these conferences allowed me to think about and identify information about how rural community colleges extend access and extend economic development to the citizens they serve. During the Spring semester of 2004, it was possible to make a much longer visit at the College. This was scheduled for the summer of 2004. A letter was drafted explaining in what areas the project needed more information and asking for support to make the extended summer stay. It was shared with the SWTJC Board of Trustees at their regular meeting (a copy is included in Appendix A). Confirmation from SWTJC was
received indicating that they would not only allow me back to campus in the summer, they would provide me room and board and transportation to the branch campuses. I began working on my formal interview protocols and communicating with the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board (IRB) to receive permission to interview subjects for my study. Approval from IRB to proceed with my research was awarded in June of 2004 and I left for my month-long stay in July of 2004 (a copy is included in Appendix B).

During my extended visit I lived in a residence hall on the SWTJC main campus in Uvalde for the month of July in 2004. The College provided me with meals in the cafeteria (their breakfast tacos are to die for!), a parking pass, countless hours of interviews, library assistance, transportation to the branch campuses and other assistance needed for the study. They were kind hosts, and made my stay away from home as pleasant and purposeful as possible. During this visit, it was possible to spend time with faculty, students, administrators, and regional leaders at all of the four campuses. I was also able to fish and explore the beautiful surrounding landscapes on both the Frio and Nueces Rivers. It was quite an exciting experience.

It is with the same anticipation that I headed back to SWTJC in Mid-May of 2005. I was excited to again ask the question “what happened here” and compare findings with the information obtained in May of 2002 and July of 2004. This last trip was the culmination of three years of research on the College, the Rural Community College Initiative, and the region. The bulk of this final visit revolved around compiling hard data. SWTJC is currently in the process of preparing for their 2005 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation, and they are ripe with data that goes with the completion of my project, to which attention is now turned.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This in-depth approach to study Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) and their Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) participation was taken because the inherent goal of the RCCI process was to be transformative, in the region, its public and private entities, its communities, and in the colleges themselves. The Rural Community College Initiative was a multi-million dollar commitment from two divisions of the Ford Foundation, its Rural Poverty and Resources Division, and its Education and Culture Division. MDC, Inc., a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization supported with grants and contracts from foundations, state, and local governments, and the private sector, managed the RCCI.

The American Association of Community Colleges performed the major formal assessment of the Rural Community College Initiative. The American Association of Community College’s (AACC) assessment of the RCCI program was not able to adequately “unpeel” the onion of transformation at any specific participating rural college, or to provide an intense analysis of each institution while progressing through the Initiative. It is my hope that the present study serves to add to AACC’s assessment of the RCCI by thorough and in-depth exploration of a single region and campus community. This work also seeks to add to the lack in the community college literature of book-length treatments of institutional transformation at any type of community college, and especially for a rural community college. It is also hoped that this work will inform and guide agencies and policymakers in the future.
Methodology

This study's purpose was to document the institutional transformation that resulted from a rural community college's participation in a major foundation’s grant making program. This study examines the region and the College over its eight years of participation (1994-2002) in the Rural Community College Initiative. This study provides a “before and after” snapshot of the region and the College, beginning with Katsinas’ 1994-5 site visits and ending with Thomas’ 2002, 2004, and 2005 site visits. Therefore this study is organized into two parts. The first part, approaching the case study, includes the introduction and chapters 2, 3, and 4, describing key points about the region and the College PRIOR to the College's participation in RCCI. The second part, institutional transformation, is based solely upon data obtained by Thomas after the College had participated in RCCI for nine years. The second part focuses on an analysis as to whether SWTJC achieved the access and economic development goals of RCCI, and if those goals were sustained after the Ford Foundation grant funding ended.

The starting point is Katsinas’ 1994-95 study of the College, which provides the initial framework as to what the college “looked like” prior to its participation in the Ford Foundation’s RCCI program. The methodology used to “tell the story” is that of Burton R. Clark from his seminal work The Open Door College (1960). This work helped derive my research approach and structure. Just as Clark in his study was exploring the evolution of San Jose Junior College, my work was exploring the evolution of SWTJC as it participated in the RCCI. In his extensive Methodological Note in the Appendix Clark writes,

The research was almost entirely carried out by informal means- by unstructured interview and observation and the perusal of documents…the study relied almost completely on informal methods. The informal procedures permitted intensive work
with selected sources. To ask about the determinants of a particular policy, it is more promising to go to the five persons likely to know than to the fifty that do not know…While formal techniques can contribute to this quest in organizational studies of the level and type represented here, they can hardly be relied upon as the sole or perhaps even the major source of significant information (Clark, 1960, pp. 180, 181, 182).

My research methodology followed and relied on both primary and secondary sources. It centered around three approaches to gathering information, in-depth interviews, content analysis of primary and secondary sources (Professor Katsinas’ original site notes, MDC notes and publications, SWTJC meeting minutes, local and the college’s newspapers, journal articles, numerous Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board websites) and participant observation. A formal letter addressed to SWTJC’s President and its Board of Trustees, was drafted by Katsinas and the researcher which laid out the intent, purpose, and rational for the study (Appendix A). After permission was granted by SWTJC to undertake the study, the researcher followed the appropriate procedures to obtain approval from University of North Texas (UNT) Institution Review Board (IRB). Approval for the study was granted by IRB and is included as Appendix B.

My first visit to the college was in May of 2002. Two days were spent in Uvalde, with one full day of interviews and meetings with college administration, staff, and local business and educational leaders. For the month of July 2004, I lived in SWTJC’s Hubbard Hall with about twenty other students, took my meals in the Mathews Student Center, and performed my work side-by-side SWTJC faculty, staff, and students. I attended several SWTJC staff meetings and a SWTJC Board of Trustees meeting in July of 2004, and traveled numerous times with SWTJC administrators to the branch campuses in Crystal City, Eagle Pass, and Del Rio. It was possible
to dedicate two complete days to the Eagle Pass and Del Rio campuses, respectively, where numerous photographs of the facilities were taken (these are included as Appendix C), and interviews with key administrative staff, student support staff, were conducted. Interviews with key members of the business community in the region arranged by the Associate Dean of Instruction for Del Rio, Dr. Don Tomas, also added to my understanding of the issues facing the branch campuses.

The following spring, in May of 2005, I spent another week living in Hubbard Hall, and taking my meals at the Mathews Student Center. I again attended administrative meetings, a SWTJC Board of Trustees meeting, and interviewed several staff and students at the Uvalde campuses. Considerable amounts of time on this trip were spent with the Institutional Research Office to locate budget reports, strategic plans for 1990-2004, grant requests, and copies of all Board of Trustee meeting minutes from 1990-February of 2005. It was again possible to travel to the branch campuses of Crystal City, Eagle Pass, and Del Rio, and take more photographs (included as Appendix C) and re-interview key administrative staff, as well as faculty, and students.

Research Questions

The following research questions directed the research of this study:

1) Did participation in the Rural Community College Initiative change Southwest Texas Junior College?

2) How did participation in RCCI impact the College’s organization, administration, and finances?

3) How did participation in RCCI change how the faculty at SWTJC approach what they do?

4) In what ways did participation in RCCI change students and student services at SWTJC?
5) How did participation in RCCI impact SWTJC’s efforts in delivering extended access and regional economic development?

6) Which SWTJC activities that the Rural Community College Initiative financially supported were sustained after participation in RCCI ended in 2002?
CHAPTER 2
THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE VALLEY:
UVALDE-THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE, AND THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

Introduction

As a precursor to discussing the involvement of Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) in the Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative, this chapter provides an introduction to the Middle Rio Grande Valley, and Uvalde. It begins with a description of physical characteristics of southwest Texas, followed by a brief history of the region and its people. This is followed by a summative history of the institution of higher education serving the area, Southwest Texas Junior College. This chapter is organized in two sections: Uvalde-The Land and its People, and The Junior College.

Uvalde-The Land and its People

From the sun-drenched rocks on the edge of the Chihuahuan desert to the deep blue water holes on the Nueces, Frio, and Sabinal Rivers, southwest Texas is a place of immense contrasts. Its three distinct river canyons running north and south shape Northern Uvalde County. From east to west, these canyons are the Sabinal Canyon, formed by the Sabinal River, the Frio Canyon, formed by the Frio River, and the Nueces Canyon, formed by the Nueces River. These canyons were settled by different families over the course of a few hundred years, and each has its own unique history and culture that has developed (Kincaid, 1962).

The home of Southwest Texas Junior College's (SWTJC), the Middle Rio Grande Valley, sits on the fringe where the green scrub of the Texas Hill Country meets the rolling desert plains
of Mexico. The College's 1990 nine county service area encompassed some 13,510 square miles, an area larger than Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut combined. It is rural; in 1990 the majority of its population lived in small towns. The service area is spread over vast distances and is also bucolic, as evidenced by the fact that in the early 1990s, the region had less than one half of the road miles and less than one fourth of the telephone access lines as similarly sized regions for Texas' council of governments (COGs). The majority of the population found in southwest Texas is centered in less than five percent of the available land. In this region there are vast areas of land with no inhabitants at all (personal interview, 2004, Ricky McNeil).

Thus, in 1994 SWTJC actually served a nine county Mexican border region comprising an area of some 13,510 square miles. In 1994, the population was 134,482, with most living in small towns. The College state assigned service delivery area included Dimmit, Edwards, Kinney, La Salle, Maverick, Real, Uvalde, Val Verde, and Zavala counties. It was predominantly rural, encompassing vast distances. SWTJC is the only fully developed regionally accredited institution of postsecondary education in the entire region. The main campus of the College is located in Uvalde, 82 miles west of San Antonio. Uvalde is 55 miles from the Mexican border and is located at the intersection of US Highway 90 (East-West) and Texas Highway 83 (North-South). In addition to its main campus in Uvalde, the College in 1990 operated two out-of-taxing district service centers in Del Rio and Eagle Pass, both of which are located on the Mexican border and are major entry points to Mexico (SWTJC, May 22, 1995, p 4).

Just like the geography that encompasses it, the City of Uvalde is a town rich in juxtaposition. It is the only small southwest Texas town that can call such noted national dignitaries as former Vice President “Cactus” Jack Garner and Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe
native sons. It is the home of the regional airport and hospital, and some of the world’s finest white-tail deer and dove hunting. Uvalde is also home to a four-campus regional community college district, Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC).

Driving down its primary thoroughfare, US highway 90, today one can see beside the Wal-Mart and the HEB grocery store countless “mom and pop” taco huts. Uvalde is the social and cultural regional hub for the citizens of this sparsely populated region of the American Southwest. It is also a place where stands for hunting deer can be seen for sale from the time you enter the city until you leave it. Deer blinds are even sold outside one of the main grocery stores! The ties between the citizens of this region and the land go back as far as humans have settled this area. With an economy strongly influenced by agriculture and natural resource usage, most people here have a “back to-the-land attitude for living. From farming such diverse crops as pecans and spinach, to ranching goats, sheep, and cattle, this land has provided sustenance to its residents for many generations. For these and many other reasons, it is truly a special place in the hearts and minds of its citizens.

The same natural beauty, wildlife, and cold spring water that have attracted people to this part of Texas for the last ten thousand years still beacon newcomers to this breathtaking southwestern landscape. One campus visit in July 2004 occurred after two weeks of heavy rains, making the area much greener and rivers higher than they normally are in summer. The Frio River crossing, about four miles north of the College, was underwater but still forgeable when I first arrived. Families lined up at the crossing everyday, enjoying the crystal clear water while cooling off from the intense summer heat. From fishing and swimming, to having a drink in the shade on the rocks by the river, people here enjoy the many sites and sounds of this beautiful area.
The right to access the rivers and enjoy them has been a hot button issue between the local citizenry and the predominantly “absentee” landowners. Water is a precious and fleeting commodity in the American Southwest. During my month-long stay in July of 2004, the water level declined from a gushing over-the-road-depth of two foot, to one foot, down to a trickle. When I returned to the same crossing during my next visit in May of 2005, it was hard to even imagine that so much water had flowed through what was now a bone-dry riverbed. In a region that averages less than fifteen inches of rain per year, it is not surprising that water rights and the land usage related to them would remain a key issue. In the city of Del Rio, one of the largest current issues is how water will be regulated. There are a few large landowners that have created a water conservation district for Val Verde County. This is a very contentious issue because the bottom line is about the conservation board being able to control the flow of water and not the city of Del Rio. This is dangerous predicament, because “he who controls the water, controls Del Rio” (Personal Interview, July 2004, Juan Gonzales).

SWTJC’s Board of Trustee’s President, Rodolfo Flores believed that all growth in the region would eventually be determined by water. There had been talk about a water pipe line coming out of Kinney County into San Antonio. San Antonio is the one of the largest Metropolitan city in the United States whose primary source of water has been an aquifer and not surface water (San Antonio Public Information Office, 2005). There is much trepidation and debate about what San Antonio will do to solve their impending water crisis and they continual look toward the Middle Rio Grande region’s water as a potential solution. Mr. Flores said that the cost of water for the local citizens (and the College) has almost doubled, with increased fees being passed down from the Edwards Aquifer Commission, to the city, to the citizens.
The immense number of white-winged and mourning dove found here brings thousands of hunters to southwest Texas every year. Searching for the elusive “Muy Grande” of white-tail deer and the other fine hunting opportunities in Uvalde County, including javelina, wild turkey, quail, and wild hogs, brings in more than $16 million annually to the local economy according to the Uvalde Chamber of Commerce (Personal Correspondence, March 11, 2005). In July of 2004, there were already signs offering dove hunts and hotel rooms, and the local Wal-mart had all of their hunting supplies out in prime locales within the store in anticipation for the upcoming dove season that did not start until September. Farming, ranching, and hunting are all intricately tied not only the regional economy; they also resonate deeply within the locals’ psyche. People here have always worked with natural environment for their survival, and even after thousands of years, this fact still shapes many lives in the region.

In addition to municipalities like Uvalde and the rapidly growing border towns, the College serves a vast rural area comprised mostly of hamlets, some of four hundred people or less. Booming border towns and dusty crossroad settlements with a post office and little else are but some of the multiple juxtapositions found in Southwest Texas. I was immediately faced with the contradiction of having a few white people, or Anglos as they are known here, who possess all or most of the capital and much of the political power, while the masses of primarily Hispanic people are without either.

Simply put, the Anglos have been the haves, and the Hispanics have been the have-nots. Things here have improved over April of 1970, when 500 Mexican-American Uvalde High School students walked out in protest to the school district’s discriminatory practices. The Texas Rangers were called in at the request of the Uvalde Independent School Districts Board to keep the peace. Then US Senator and future Vice President of the United States Walter F. Mondale
(Minnesota), Chairman of the United States Senate Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, traveled to Uvalde to hear pleas for help and to rectify the situation. By 1975, only six Mexican-Americans had served in public office, and none of those were in leading positions. Today, while Hispanic participation rates in local politics are still low in comparison to their percentages in the population, numerous Mexican-American citizens do hold public offices across the region.

While this has changed some since the region’s most turbulent times in the past fifty years, the division of power is by no means a “dead issue” here. Today a few individuals, predominately Anglo and some Hispanic, live lavishly, while the majority is lower middle class or less. As the May 22, 1994 RCCI Implementation Grant Proposal for SWTJC noted,

A characteristic of the region's population is low educational attainment (9.6 years average, with 6.4 average for Hispanics), which indicates that education is not valued. This is not surprising when one realizes that the high school dropout rate is fifty percent and there are few jobs for high school and college graduates available. Many of the graduates find they need to leave the region to seek employment. There appears to be a lack of progress-oriented attitudes and a low public awareness of opportunities for self-improvement (p. 4-5).

The idea of a small rich white class and a large poorer minority class is not unique to Uvalde, but is one that is so intricately tied to the cities and in the college’s development that in order to understand what has occurred and what is currently happening here, this topic must not be marginalized. While the City of Uvalde does not have the deeply troubled racial history of its
neighbor forty miles to the south, Crystal City, this does not mean that racism and discrimination have not reared its ugly head there as well.

Crystal City or “Cristal” as known by Mexicanos lies in heart of the “winter garden” region, an area known for fertile soil and abundant water from artesian springs. Crystal City has been a hub for agri-business since the town’s inception in the early twentieth century. It was the site of two distinct grassroots revolutions that sought control over the city’s political and civic institutions. The first revolution occurred in 1963, when five South Texas Mexicanos ran for city council seats in Cristal and won. This group became known as “Los Cinco” (The Five), and was the first group of Hispanics to assume control of any city council in South Texas. The second revolution occurred just seven years later, in 1970, with the development of the La Raza Unida Party (The Race United), or the RUP. In the end, both revolts were strong in principle but somewhat weaker in results. The “white flight” from Crystal City to neighboring cities, primarily Uvalde, which followed the second revolt, decimated the city’s economy. Even by the late 1990s, Crystal City had still not recovered (Navarro, 1998). Boarded buildings and empty storefronts are still a part of the downtown area, as the pictures taken by the author in 2004 in Appendix C document.

The area served by the College is geographically isolated from any large cities. Del Rio in Val Verde County is the largest town in the region, with a population in 1994 of 34,401. The remaining towns have 1994 populations as follows: Eagle Pass (Maverick County) 24,097; Uvalde (Uvalde County) 14,098; Crystal City (Zavala County) 8,496; Carrizo Springs (Dimmit County) 7,553; Hondo (Medina County) 6,152; Sabinal (Uvalde County) 2,002; Brackettville (Kinney County) 1,816; La Pryor (Zavala County) 550; and Leakey (Real County) 516. The largest nearby city is in fact Piedras Negras across the border in Mexico from Eagle Pass, with an
approximate population in 1994 of approximately 200,000. The 134,482 people (1990 Census) livening in the College’s nine county state assigned service area are spread over 13,510 square miles. The state assigned service delivery area of the College is larger than several northeastern states.

The City of Uvalde itself is a small town with a population just over 16,000, while just over 26,000 residents live in Uvalde County. The populations of the City and County have remained largely flat with only a marginal increase since the 1990 US Census. Other cities in the region though, particularly the border cities of Del Rio in Val Verde County, and Eagle Pass in Maverick County have experienced near double digits rates of growth since 1990 (US Census, 2000). In 1990, the population of Eagle Pass and Del Rio were 15,651 and 20,705 respectfully (US Census, 2000). By 2003, Eagle Pass had an estimated population approaching 40,000, and Del Rio had a population approaching 25,000. The "sister cities" across the Mexican boarder of Cuidad Acunã (Del Rio) and Piedras Negras (Eagle Pass), have estimated populations of 70,000 and 250,000, respectively. Exact numbers are difficult to obtain along the border due to the high rates of transmigration of citizens back and forth between Mexico and the United States. As the locals who cross it daily know very well, the border between Texas and Mexico has always been porous.

The significant growth throughout southwest Texas has occurred primarily in the Hispanic population. Uvalde County has grown roughly five percent since 1990, and about 65% of its citizens are Hispanic. Maverick County, whose county seat is Eagle Pass, has grown from 36,000 to about 50,000 in 2003. Of those 50,000, 95% classified themselves as Hispanic by the 2000 Census. Val Verde County, whose county seat is Del Rio, has grown from 39,000 to 47,000; there 75% of respondents classified themselves as Hispanic. Not every county in
SWTJC's nine county service area has seen growth, however. Zavala County (Crystal City) saw a population decline from roughly 12,500 in 1990 to around 10,000 in the 2000 census, in which 91% were Hispanic. While the numbers of whites have grown slightly, their representation across the region's fast growing Hispanic population has resulted in a slide in their percentage of the total population throughout the region (US Census, 2000).

In Chart II- A “Population Trends for the SWTJC Service Area,” population trend projections are shown for the SWTJC's 1994 nine county service area. Chart IV-A shows a projection in 1995 of Hispanics accounting for 71.5% of the total population, and Anglos making up 26.1%. For 2005, Chart IV-A shows Hispanics account for 74.2% of the population in the College's service area, with the percentage of Anglos falling to 23.4%. Projections for 2010 provided in the chart show Hispanics growing to represent 75.2% of the total population, with Anglos falling to 22.4%.
Population Trends for Service Area and Population Projection
Southwest Texas Junior College - 1995, 2005, and 2010

Figure 1.

Data Source: Texas A&M University Department of Rural Sociology’s Center for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research and Education
The educational achievements of the majority of the population of the nine-county area were a major factor in contributing to the low socioeconomic standards. In 1994, the median level of education completed by those 25 years or older was 9.6 years in comparison to 11.6 for the state as a whole. The median years of school completed by those of Hispanic origin, 25 years or older, was 6.4 years compared to the state wide median of 8.8. The most unique feature of the area served by the College was the large number of Hispanics. The percentage ranges from 44% in Medina County to 94% in Maverick County. The percentage of Hispanics for the 1994 nine-county state-assigned service delivery area was 72% (Burchfield, 1994).

The economy is to a significant extent based upon agriculture and natural resource extraction (oil and natural gas). The lack of a broad-based economy beyond these two pillars, combined with limited alternative skills and education results in persistently high rates of unemployment and underemployment. In June of 1994, just prior to SWTJC participation in the RCCI, the unemployment rate for the towns of Crystal City, Carrizo Springs, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde averaged 16%, more than double the national average. Eagle Pass had the highest rate of 22% (San Antonio Region Labor Force figures, June 1994, cited in SWTJC, May 22, 1995).

In 1994, when Katsinas made his initial visit to SWTJC, the average unemployment rate for the most significant population centers of the College's nine county state assigned service delivery area, the cities of Crystal City, Carrizo Springs, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde, was 16%. Eagle Pass had the highest rate at 22%. The unemployment average for the nine counties in SWTJC's service area was 13%, with Kinney County having the lowest (3%) rate and Zavala County having the highest (27%) rate. In 1994, the Texas statewide average was approximately 7%, a figure well under half the rate in southwest Texas. Figures from June 1994 from the Texas
Employment Commission indicated there are 9,371 jobless people out of a total civilian labor force of 59,464 in the four major population centers. In many households, one or more persons are unemployed. The median family income for the area is $11,550, about half of the statewide median family income of $21,992. For the Hispanic sector of the population, the economic situation is even worse at $9,237 (Southwest Texas Regional Model for Educational Access and Economic Development planning project, August 15, 1994).

As the College's May 22, 1995 RCCI Implementation Grant Proposal report noted, "On every index of economic and social development this area is one of the most disadvantaged in the nation." (p. 4). The early 1990’s economy suffered from devaluation of the peso in Mexico and a loss in retail sales to Mexican citizens. This resulted in a loss of jobs in Texas. With limited alternative skills and education, many of the people remained unemployed. There was hope however; with the recent passage of the North America Free Trade Agreement, new economic expansion in the region might occur.

There is a very strong military presence in the region. The city of Del Rio is home to Laughlin Air Force Base which is located six miles east of the city, and about nine miles from the international bridge to Ciudad Acunã, Coahuila, Mexico. Laughlin is named after 2nd Lt. Jack Thomas Laughlin, a Del Rio native killed over Java in the South Pacific in the early days of World War II. The base originally opened in the early 1940s. It was the Army Air Force B-26 training base during the war and was closed in 1947, after the war. It reopened during the Korean Conflict as a jet fighter training base. From the late 1950s until 1963 it was the home of the Strategic Air Command's 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing. A 4080th U-2 pilot from Laughlin discovered Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962. Major Rudolf Anderson Jr. of Laughlin was the only combat casualty of the Cuban Missile Crisis who died when his U-2 was shot down
over Cuba. In 1962, the base became an Air Training Command base and its mission for the past 37 years has been to train new pilots for the United States Air Force and allied nations. Approximately 400 new military pilots earn their silver wings at Laughlin each year after an intensive 52-week course where they learn to fly using the T-6A Texan II, T-38 Talon, and T-1A Jayhawk trainers (Laughlin Air Force Base Website, accessed August 6, 2004).

Uvalde is home of a former World War II Army Air Force training base that helped put both American servicemen and those of its allies into the air. Garner Army Air Field, named for Uvalde native John Nance "Cactus Jack" Garner, Vice President for the first two of Franklin D. Roosevelt's four terms, was a contact pilot school during World War II. Built on a 750-acre tract located in the eastern corner of the City in July of 1941, the land was donated to the federal government after a successful city bond election in March of that year. At its peak, 125 instructors and 250 support staff operated the facility. The first cadet class began training in January 1942, after completion of a five-week orientation at Kelly Air Field in San Antonio. In June of 1945, even before the end of World War II, the air base was deactivated. The Middle Rio Grande Valley region of Texas is home to incredible thermal lifts which was one of the reasons the Garner Army Air Force base was originally built there. Consequently, the longest non-powered flight in America was logged in Uvalde County.

After Garner Air Field's closure, area citizens began to discuss what was to become of the facility. The City Council prevailed upon the federal government to deed the facility to it for use as Uvalde's municipal airport. The town’s leaders had the foresight to see the growing need for higher education in the region, and under Texas’ new 1947 Junior College Act took advantage of the opportunity to create the state’s first multi-county community college district. An election was held, and three counties—Real, Uvalde, and Zavala, voted to financially support their new
junior college through taxing themselves. The Uvalde Independent School District purchased ten one-story buildings from the base for what was to become Southwest Texas Junior College.

In the late 1940s, four hangars, a control tower, and several runways were converted to accommodate a flight-training operation under Julian Dart and Trans-Texas Airlines. In the 1950s, a company run by Chester Nielson used one of the hangars to transform World War II aircraft into civilian aircraft. A company to operate a school for auto mechanics and bodywork used another hangar. In the 1960s, Art McKinley managed an airport flying school and charter service. The Williamson-Dickie Manufacturing Company at one time operated a garment factory in a hangar at the former airfield. Although many of the airfield's buildings were designed for temporary use, the stucco buildings and much of the original landscaping maintained their original appearance for over thirty years. The original airfield academic building, hospital, pump house, and swimming pool were renovated for continued use by Southwest Texas Junior College, but no longer exist today (Knapick, 1996).

The Junior College

SWTJC was created as a public, tri-county state supported junior college composed of Real, Uvalde, and Zavala counties. These three counties compose the taxing district of the college created under the 1947 Texas Junior College Act. In fact, SWTJC was the first multi-county junior college created in Texas under the 1947 law. What was once an abandoned air base has, over the course of nearly six decades of operation, has been transformed into a place that attempts to provide citizens of one of the poorest regions of the nation with access to the opportunities provided by advanced learning. Turning dreams into reality is a goal of Southwest Texas Junior College today. The institution the author found in the twenty-first century is one that is simultaneously proud of its past and looking forward to its future.
The College has the good fortune of having its history recorded in two publications, *From Barracks to Bricks* and *From Bricks to the Border*. *Barracks to Bricks*, published in 1972, takes the College through its first twenty-five years, from the shut-down of Garner Air base in 1947 to its emergence as the hub for higher education in the Middle Rio Grande Region of Texas. *From Bricks to the Border*, published in 1996 as SWTJC approached its fiftieth anniversary, documents the College’s growth and development from 1972 to the early 1990’s. It describes the College’s transformation from a hodgepodge of barracks and a few campus buildings to the modern campus system, on the verge of expanding into a regional higher education multi-campus system.

As will be shown in the chapters that follow, the College has changed a great deal since *Bricks to Borders* was published. It is arguable that more change has occurred in the past ten years as at any time in the College’s prior history. The sleepy little College “in-Uvalde-for-Uvalde” as it had been known from 1947 until the mid-to-late 1990’s, has grown into a regional multi-campus system that has taken on the arduous task of providing educational opportunities to a state-assigned service area larger than Massachusetts, in a region of the United States characterized by chronically high rates of poverty, high school dropout, unemployment and underemployment, all of which feed directly into lower than national average rates of college degree completion. While the area is still rich and varied in its many natural resources and in bucolic beauty, many of the regions problems plaguing this area for the past fifty years have not gone away.

As the RCCI Implementation Grant Proposal for SWTJC noted:

A poorly aligned high school/junior college program prevents an effective transition from school-to-school. Only 10.6% of freshmen passed all three sections of the state-
mandated entry test (Texas Academic Skills Program) in 1993-94. Limited planning, coordination and standards setting between secondary schools, college, and employers adversely affect the school-to-work transition for students. Regionally, there is fragmented planning and coordination among employers, economic development agencies, and educational institutions. All of these factors contribute to a curricula that is not workforce focused and not academically seamless (May 22, 1995. p.5).

Movement toward a more regional view of access and economic development was evidenced by the 1994 alignment of the College's nine county service region with the state-assigned service regions of both the Middle Rio Grande Development Council and the Area Council of Governments, all serving the same nine county service region. Soon after, the Middle Rio Grande Development Council and the Area Council of Governments also expanded their service areas, to keep all three contiguous (Personal Communication, July 27, 2005, Ismael Sosa,). Such consistent regional organization where the adult literacy, employment, and training "maps match" does not always occur in much of rural America, diluting resources and investment (Katsinas, 1994).

It is very important to note it was a 1995 statute passed by the Texas Legislature, implemented in 1996, that finally assigned each county in Texas to a public community college service area. Two additional counties, Frio and Medina, were added to SWTJC's previous nine county service delivery area. Today, therefore, SWTJC has a three county taxing district and an 11 county state-assigned service delivery area. While the mid-1990s statute assigned every Texas County to an existing public community college district, it did not allow for district-wide property tax referenda across all of the state-assigned counties. Texas law presently forbids tax money to be spent outside of the taxing district, and does not allow for representation on the
College Board of Trustees from outside of the taxing district. In the case of SWTJC, therefore, two-thirds of the people pay no local tax dollars to support the College, and trustees for the College can only come from Real, Uvalde, or Zavala counties. According to the 1990 census, the total population of the counties in the taxing district was 37,914, while the total population of the counties in the state-assigned service district, but outside of the taxing district, totaled 174,869, a ratio of about 1:5 (Katsinas, Alexander, & Opp, 2003). This quirk in Texas law has created a situation where the Board of Trustees for SWTJC must continuously take care to balance the needs and wants of the three taxing counties they represent, while being keenly aware of the eight more populous counties in the state-assigned service district the College on whose board they serve is also charged to provide services for.

The massive size of SWTJC’s state-assigned service delivery area is demonstrated on the following map showing the eleven county’s SWTJC is responsible for providing higher educational opportunities. The map on page 21 “Map II-B SWTJC’s Eleven County State-Assigned Service Delivery Area is a clear indication of the enormous geographical challenge the College faces in providing services to all of the citizens in its massive service area.
Southwest Texas Junior College Eleven County Service Area

Data Source: SWTJC Fact Book 2003-2004
The very reference by the local population to SWTJC as “the Junior College” is a simple yet powerful indication of the extent to which the institution has become embedded into the communities it serves. Professor Katsinas, who has spent over twenty years in the field visiting rural community colleges in almost every state, noted that when locals refer to the rural college in their area, they typically call it “The College”. What this really means, he notes, is that SWTJC is their College. A key challenge, then, for the College's leadership in the mid-1990s as it approached involvement in the Ford Foundation's RCCI program was to get locals in the towns and small cities beyond the original three county taxing district to also refer to SWTJC as "the Junior College" in the same positive manner as did the residents of Uvalde, Real, and Zavala counties.

Southwest Texas Junior College is an institution struggling to meet its mission of providing access to its population while staying true to its roots as a “student/people centered” institution, where faculty intimately know the students and their families. SWTJC is probably as rural as they come in the United States, with thousands of miles in its service area still undisturbed by human hands. While the growth of the City of Uvalde has been slow over the past twenty years, population along the Mexican border has grown at astronomical rates, and shows no signs of letting up. Consistent with the 20% population growth in Del Rio and Eagle Pass, the College’s branch campuses continue to grow rapidly each semester. Both report growths from the Fall to Spring terms, unusual for institutions of higher education. This speaks both to the pent-up demand and unmet need for higher education in these areas (personal communication, July 2004, Don Tomas & Gilbert Bermea).

What is happening in the Middle Rio Grande Region today is echoing across the American Southwest—a white majority has become a minority, and the Hispanic majority is
beginning to flex its political muscle and asserting a newfound sense of power. With this transition in mind, the study at hand examines the key question of “What happened to the Southwest Texas Junior College following its involvement with the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI)?” Despite the challenge of serving one of the most historically impoverished regions of the United States, SWTJC appeared to be on the verge of fulfilling RCCI's charge to become an “agent of change” in 1994. During my July 2004 visit, current SWTJC President Ismael Sosa spoke of the College being on the cusp of something larger than it had ever been before in its history:

We are truly an open door college. Students can come in and talk to my deans or me, and we listen. Now, we are struggling to maintain the balance between serving students and increased growth. Unfunded growth is an especially difficult challenge for us as a rural college. With more students coming with more needs, we are finding it difficult to maintain that same sense of student-centered service we have always had. But it is important to me and to all the people that work here to make sure that the students and their families are treated well when they interact with the college (personal conversation, July 7, 2004, Ismael Sosa).
CHAPTER 3

SETTING THE STAGE FOR TRANSFORMATION:
RURAL AMERICA, THE FORD FOUNDATION, AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Introduction

This chapter begins with the issue of severe and persistent poverty in the United States. The next section is an examination of factors that led the Ford Foundation to make a major funding commitment to rural community colleges, including a description of the study the Foundation commissioned by the Community Colleges of Appalachia, through West Virginia University-Parkersburg (hereafter, “the Parkersburg study”). The Parkersburg study framed some of the key problems, issues, and challenges that then led the Ford Foundation to hire MDC, Inc., of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to manage its new Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). How RCCI worked to build upon and move past failed rural development strategies follows. Attention is then turned to a description of the Rural Community College Initiative’s operating philosophy, "Vision to Action." The chapter closes with a description of Southwest Texas Junior College’s (SWTJC) initial involvement with the RCCI.

The chapter is organized as follows: Severely Persistent Poverty in Rural America, The Parkersburg Study and the Rural Community College Initiative, Building Upon the Failed Rural Development Strategies of the Past, RCCI’s Operating Philosophy: Vision to Action, and Southwest Texas Junior College and the RCCI.
Severely Persistent Poverty in Rural America

In general terms, poverty is often thought of as an urban problem. Boarded up storefronts and inner city ghettos quickly come to mind. However, poverty is not only an urban problem; it is a rural problem as well. When the two are compared, rural areas show up again and again in much higher proportions than do their urban cousins. While the author has no desire to downplay the challenge of urban poverty, the simplistic idea of where poverty exists for most Americans must be reshaped to a more accurate depiction. The vast areas of America’s rural poor “country ghettos” must be included. While 11% of America's total population lives in poverty, and 11% of all urban Americans live in poverty, 13% of rural Americans live in poverty (Miller & Rowley, 2000, pg.1).


- Of all 3,101 counties in the US, 1,610 are nonmetro with poverty rates above the national average rage, outnumbering metro almost 5 to 1
- Of the 500 poorest counties, 459 are nonmetro, outnumbering metro 11 to 1
- Of the 500 lowest per capita income counties, 481 are nonmetro, outnumbering metro counties 25 to 1
- And of the 500 highest per capita income counties, only 150 are nonmetro, outnumbered by metro more than 2 to 1 (Miller & Rowley, 2000, p.1).
The nine pilot colleges selected to receive Ford Foundation grants through the Rural Community College Initiative in its first round in 1994 were located among five historical poor regions of the United States: Appalachia, the Lower Mississippi Delta, the Texas Border Region, the Four Corners of the Southwest, and the High Plains Region of Montana. Miller and Rowley’s 2000 report demonstrated that the exact areas the RCCI set out to assist are indeed still among the poorest regions of the United States. While large parts of nonmetro areas of the United States had poverty rates as high as 20%, counties in Appalachia, the lower Mississippi Delta, Deep South, the Southwest, and the Northern Plains came out worse, with poverty rates averaging 20% and more for their areas (Miller & Rowley, 2000).

These same regions were also found persistently poor over the past forty years. In Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, Middle Rio Grande, Rio Grande Valley, and on Native American reservations, poverty rates of greater than 20% have been found in every census from 1960 through 2000. Among the 500 poorest counties in the United States, nonmetro outnumbers metro by a ratio of 11 to 1. And again these areas-- Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, Rio Grande region, and Native American reservations in the High Plains-- are disproportionately represented among the 500 poorest regions of the United States during the 2000 census (Miller & Rowley, 2000). It is no surprise these regions are also the lowest per capita income counties in the United States. Indeed, large parts of rural America earn incomes well below the national average. This lack of wealth presents a truly difficult challenge for the public community colleges serving these areas. At a time when local taxpayers are being asked to pick up the slack following cuts in state appropriations for public higher education, including community colleges, there is great pressing need and little taxable income available to meet those needs. An examination of the trends between 1990 and 2000 census reveals a very frightening image: Many
counties in the United States in 1990 that fell within the 75% to 100% of the national per capita income average fell to the 50% range in 2000 (Miller & Rowley, 2000). In addition, the per capita income gap between nonmetro incomes as a percent of metro income fell as well. According to the 1990 census, the nonmetro income in Texas was 76% of metro income; by the 2000 census, that percentage for Texas had dropped to 71% (Miller & Rowley, 2000).

Simply put, America’s poor appear to be getting poorer. As cost for services, including higher education, have increasingly shifted from federal to state to local revenue streams, the disparities have magnified. In 1990, if a metro county college had $1,000,000, of taxable income in its taxing district, its nonmetro neighbor would have roughly $760,000 in its taxing district. In 2000, while that same metro county would still have $1,000,000 of taxable income, the nonmetro college’s amount of taxable income had fallen to $700,000. These factors force rural community colleges to continue fighting a two-fold struggle of less taxable income and because of lower economies of scale, increased operating costs just to open their doors (Katsinas, Alexander, & Opp, 2003). Overall, from 1990 to 2000 the gap between nonmetro and metro per capita income increased in 41 states. Miller and Rowley sum it up best when they say, “While the 1990’s were an era of prosperity, judging by per capita income, that prosperity has significantly bypassed rural America” (Miller & Rowley, 2000, p. 10).

The summary of the Miller and Rowley (2000) RUPRI report speaks directly to the goals and ambitions of the RCCI project. Though often thought of as an “urban problem,” poverty is an unfortunate fact of life for rural America too. Indeed, in some ways poverty in the United States falls disproportionately on rural residents and rural areas. And the problem is getting worse. The reasons are many: lower paying jobs; the prevalence of part-time and seasonal work; historically lower educational achievements; the presence of racial groups that have not
enjoyed the same opportunities as most Americans; and the relative lack of developmental capacity—infrastructure, capital, and the like.

Because the reasons are many, the solutions must be multi-faceted as well. And because the rural context differs from the urban, and because rural areas themselves are quite diverse, solutions will necessarily vary. Regardless of the exact approach, however, an effective program must take into account the long-term. Solutions that yield only short-term gains are not really solutions, only band-aids. And taking into account the long-term necessarily means addressing the issue of local capacity—helping communities build the human, social, physical, and economic capital needed to truly develop, to eliminate poverty once and for all (Miller & Rowley, 2000, p. 12).

The findings from this Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) report underscores the problems the Ford Foundation wanted to address in its involvement with the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). These areas are poor, have historically been poor, and without help will no doubt continue to be poor well into the future. Unfortunately the policies of federal and state agencies have often painted rural America with a single brush. The RCCI aimed to show that great diversity exists in rural America, even within communities that with high poverty and sparse populations, a “one size fits all approach” had done little to help improve the lives of these poorest of US citizens.

The Parkersburg Study and the Rural Community College Initiative

In the late 1980’s, Ford Foundation President Susan Beffersford, the late President of MDC, Inc. George Autry, Betsy Campbell and Walt Coward of the Ford Foundation’s Rural Poverty and Resources Division, and Steven Zwerling of its Education and Culture Division started exploring the possibility of using rural community colleges as “agents of change” (Eller
et al., 2003). A videotape produced in 1996, “Rural Community Initiative Overview,” on the RCCI includes an interview of Steven Zwerling and Betsy Campbell, who discussed the importance of their two respective divisions within the Ford Foundation coming together and joining forces to help alleviate the problem of persistent poverty in rural areas of the US. They both agreed the poverty problem was one so great no single division in Ford would have the resources and vision it would take to tackle this complex issue. As explained in 1996, RCCI would help lift-up severely persistent regions of the country through the expansion of capacity within their own community-based institutions, rural community colleges. The twin goals were to expand access and improve the local base of human capital and use rural community and Tribal colleges as catalysts for positive economic change.

In 1993, the Foundation commissioned a planning study that has since become known as the “Parkersburg Study” performed by the Community Colleges of Appalachia. Authored by Eldon Miller, who then served as President of West Virginia University-Parkersburg, Miller also served as Chair of the Board of Directors for the Community Colleges of Appalachia, whose fiscal home was WVU-Parkersburg (phone interview, May 10, 2005, Robert Pederson). Miller was charged with exploring the feasibility of community colleges in high poverty rural areas to accomplish two objectives: to contribute to community and regional development; and to assume greater leadership in promoting community linkages that can lead to community progress (Eller et al. 2003).

The Parkersburg Study focused on colleges in four of the historically poorest regions of the US: Appalachia, the Lower Mississippi River Valley, the Southwest Four Corners Region, and the High Plains Tribal lands of Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota. It included both quantitative and qualitative components. The key findings of the study were:
• Rural community colleges are predominantly transfer institutions, often offering a less comprehensive curriculum in vocational areas and non-credit workforce development than other types of community colleges.

• Community colleges are well positioned to assist economically distressed rural counties (EDRC) in achieving their long-term developmental goals.

• Community colleges that serve EDRCs are challenged by factors of small size, isolation, and overwhelming community need. The colleges are typically small, with a median head count enrollment of about 1,900 students. Unable to benefit from economies of scale, they face high unit costs, and have only limited resources to place at risk in developing and offering new programs. These data suggested the critical importance of these community colleges leveraging their limited resources through collaboration with the broadest possible range of community based organizations, other agencies, and private sector enterprises.

• These colleges are frequently found at great distance from university centers and other resources, limiting their access to the most recent advances in rural economic strategies (Eller et al. 2003).

The Parkersburg Study also produced three recommendations as starting points to assist these historically poor rural areas: First, the combination of low school and college graduation rates with high levels of unemployment and poverty strongly suggest the necessity of a two-pronged strategy of interventions, in which initiatives to increase high school and college attendance must link with efforts to expand local capacity to offer employment. Second, these colleges demonstrate a commitment to educational access and attainment, and they are well positioned to assume a leadership role in promoting economic development through strategies
including small business or micro-enterprise incubation. Third, a major objective in any effort to strengthen the capacity of community colleges to serve economically distressed rural areas must rely on strategies that promote improved communication and collaborations with and across communities (Eller et. al., 2003, p. 5). From these findings and recommendations emerged the two driving themes behind what would become the RCCI, “economic development coupled with access to education and partnerships to overcome rural isolation” (Eller et. al., 2003, p. 6).

Stephen Katsinas and Robert Pederson each assisted in the original Parkersburg study. Pederson contributed with the quantitative side and Katsinas aided with the qualitative side of the study. In 1994, Katsinas authored a research and public policy agenda “Rural Community Colleges in Economically Distressed Regions,” for Steven Zwerling. In this Katsinas dissects the premises of the Parkersburg study to a deeper level of analysis, based upon his travels to nine rural community colleges in the summer of 1993 and 1994, when he interviewed prospective presidents of rural community colleges, prior to the creation of a major foundation program, as to what programmatically might be most useful to the colleges themselves. Katsinas asked, simply, "What can the Ford Foundation do?," and then identified a number of key challenges facing rural community colleges, many of which would be eventually accomplished as Southwest Texas Junior College's participation evolved within the RCCI program.

Katsinas wrote regional summaries to help to illuminate the similarities and differences faced by the colleges in their respective rural high poverty areas. He pointed out 11 major problems and challenges facing rural community colleges in economically distressed regions that should be addressed to ameliorate the challenges brought on by persistent poverty. By summarizing Katsinas’ early thoughts and responses to the Parkersburg study, and closely reviewing his original site visit notes to Southwest Texas Junior College in 1994, it is possible to
more fully explain the “front side” of SWTJC's participation in RCCI. These 11 problems and challenges are detailed below.

The first issue Katsinas documented was the dominance of transfer within curriculum. A dominance of transfer was often times found in the various colleges curriculum. Although transfer is a key function of any community college, workforce training is the “other side of the house.” It should be noted that the Ford Foundation has had a long and enduring interest in transfer related issues. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Foundation funded the Urban Transfer Program, designed to bolster transfer rates of high minority-serving urban community colleges to four year universities, and the Transfer Assembly Project, directed by Arthur M. Cohen of the University of California, Los Angeles, to develop and then document an educationally defensible national rate of transfer. In his visit, Katsinas found the level of vocational and technical education, as well as workforce training at these rural community colleges was invariably smaller or relatively nonexistent in some cases. This was in part due to the higher costs associated with running such programs, many of which are run as "loss leaders" at larger community colleges. Smaller rural community colleges do not have the large enrollments in the liberal arts/general education programs needed to offset the more expensive, often "high tech" programs. It has been and probably always will be cheaper to offer and conduct a course in English in a classroom than it is to run an allied health or nursing program.

A second issue Katsinas identified was that the indigenous population stays regardless of economic cycles. Additionally, these rural areas were challenged to hold onto their talented young people. In his response to the Ford Foundation, Katsinas wrote, “One assumption of federal and state employment and training policy is that, geographically, workers tend to move toward jobs. One key finding of the qualitative studies was that people living in the
economically distressed area tend not to move, regardless of positive or negative economic swings” (unpublished report Katsinas, 1994, pg.2). The brain drain of the most talented and capable young people may be of the most pressing issues facing rural development.

A third issue Katsinas documented was the high proportion of minorities and rural poor at the rural community colleges that serve severely persistent high poverty areas of the United States. The very high percentages of minority and poor populations create the two-fold difficult challenge of addressing the needs of the specific minority, with fewer financial resources. The needs of African-Americans in the Mississippi delta, poor rural Whites in Appalachia, Hispanics in the Southwest, or Native Americans in the High Plains regions, while having some definite crossover were often found to be strikingly different.

A fourth issue Katsinas examined was that terrain created cultural isolation, many times severely limiting access to professional development for faculty and staff at the rural community college. While these regions (Appalachia, Mississippi Delta, Southwest, and High Plains) are dramatically different in geographic terrain, they all do share an isolation that hinders the college and its students from interacting with each other. The mountains in Appalachia and the Southwest make covering even “short” distances long in the summer and harrowing in the winter. The wide-open spaces of the delta region and the High Plains mean long hours of travel in a car or bus (if available) simply to go from one place to another. The rural community colleges that serve these regions are often located far away from the universities where their faculty and staff can receive continuing education or obtain advanced degrees. This fact has severely hindered professional staff development at these institutions, and in turn, serves to further isolate the colleges from new ideas and approaches.
A fifth issue Katsinas identified was related to the fourth—the need for the rural and Tribal colleges to “grow their own” specialized staff, who often themselves were challenged to wear many hats at the same time. As small as many of these institutions were, a phenomenon found across all the colleges was staff taking on responsibilities in areas that they often had little or no formal training in. The geographic isolation of the institutions prevented staff from easily accessing the graduate education programs that could expand the skill base, and the lack of available funds for professional staff development meant that the staff serving at these colleges were in effect often “cut...off from the profession” (Katsinas, 1994, p.7). This meant that those holding senior college administrative positions often were burdened with additional duties in areas outside of their areas of expertise.

A sixth issue identified by Katsinas was the strong emphasis on local job creation, a difficult challenge due to the unemployment rates that often exceeded 20%. Tying the vocational curricula offered by the rural community colleges to local labor market needs was "a vexing challenge," he noted. Often, there were few large manufacturing firms in the region for the colleges to partner with. Despite research data showing that so-called "high tech" programs were key to maintaining a high rural wage base, the rural and Tribal colleges that serve severely persistent high poverty regions of rural America lacked the capacity, as measured by unrestricted funds and stretched budgets, to be able to effectively connect with local businesses to provide more advanced—and expensive—technical curricula.

A seventh issue that is related to the six issue mentioned above was there were few private sector firms with which to partner. This then created a stronger reliance upon partnering with public sector agencies that provide federal flow-through funding for adult literacy, employment, and training. In many rural areas, the single largest and highest paying employer is
often the federal government (Bureau of Land Management, the US Forest Service, the Border Patrol, etc). The lack of economies of scale within the private sector makes it more difficult for these rural community and Tribal colleges to develop curricula and training on a cost-effective basis. The lack of local private sector partners underscores the need for additional entrepreneurship opportunities to promote economic development and regional prosperity.

Often, the lack of available unrestricted funding meant that even if the colleges wanted to take a chance and develop programs to provide continuing and professional education to area businesses, they lacked the financial capacity to attempt such initiatives. The lack of financial resources, Katsinas found, severely limited the capacity of rural community and Tribal colleges to offer local businesses what they needed in the way of workforce and continuing education.

An eighth issue Katsinas found was directly related to the seventh: A fragmentation of existing employment, training, and welfare-to-work systems in rural areas that often inhibits development of comprehensive strategies for community development, economic development, and a full-scale attack on adult illiteracy. It was not uncommon for Katsinas to find a five county rural community college that had three different Private Industry Councils (required under the federal Job Training Partnership Act of 1982, which preceded the Workforce Investment Act of 1996), two regional councils of government (COGs), and a myriad of offices and agencies offering welfare-to-work and adult literacy programs, not to mention regional and local city and county economic development authorities.

In this author's view, the situation is not unlike a classic psychology experiment dealing with resources. In the experiment, more and more mice are added into a system without more resources. Soon this causes the normally peaceful mice to begin attacking one another in a survival- of-the-fittest fashion. A lack of clear linkages between the agencies like employment,
training, welfare-to-work, and adult literacy service delivery areas has created turfism and balkanization of resources. This same phenomenon is probably occurring here too, multiple agencies fighting for too few resources, and what started out as a peaceful cooperation ends up as confrontation. The fragmentation Katsinas found made it much more difficult for these colleges to convene the various stakeholders to develop comprehensive approaches to common problems.

A ninth issue Katsinas documented was that low assessed property values mean lower local support. These colleges are found in the nation’s historically poorest regions. They do not have the capability of raising local tax support for the colleges. Rural colleges are therefore more dependent on state funding than other colleges. When the state does not fund the colleges, the colleges cannot look toward their local tax base to make up the difference. In Texas for example, Collin County, the richest county in Texas, had $100 of property value assessed compared to the <.01 for counties found in Southwest Texas Junior College taxing district (Katsinas, 2004, AACC unpublished presentation). These rural colleges could raise their taxes to the highest limits legally available, in-turn upsetting their residents, and still not raise enough revenue to make a real difference in their college’s overall financial situation.

A tenth issue Katsinas examined was low/non-existent involvement from the colleges in statewide policy formation and program implementation. Rural community colleges have not been players at the state and federal policy development levels. For example, the State of Kentucky had a statewide economic development authority that was created in 1967. Prior to 1995, its board had never met at any place east of Lexington, altogether missing the 22 counties that are part of the Appalachian Regional Commission in eastern Kentucky. Since most of the funding for non-credit workforce training comes from non-higher education sources, the lack of
rural community and Tribal college involvement in policy formation at the front end serves to make access to these funding streams even more difficult for the institutions on the ground.

Katsinas consistently found little representation of rural community college interests and little understanding by state policymakers of the direct and distinct problems faced by rural colleges. This has perpetuated a system where the colleges are invisible and have been “acted upon” by policy makers instead of a system of “working with” policymakers.

The eleventh and final issue discussed by Katsinas was the lack of appropriate models for rural-based institutions, and little in the way of appropriate dialog and conversation among and between the colleges and other entities. Katsinas noted that the needs of these types of rural community colleges had not been at the center of the agendas for the traditional professional associations. Organizations such as the League for Innovation in the Community College focus more on urban and suburban college needs, which are vastly different from those of rural colleges. The lack of model building and idea sharing for rural community and Tribal colleges has inhibited the development of effective solutions. From not being able to share best practices of grant-writing, to tips on dealing with professional development in isolated areas, rural colleges miss out on ways to improve their colleges and regions.

It was with these challenges in mind that the Ford Foundation and MDC approached their goals in the RCCI. Knowing that without addressing these issues, success would be fleeting at best, motivated both Ford and MDC to look for solutions that did not repeat the mistakes of the past.

The Parkersburg Study identified about 90 public rural community and Tribal colleges that served 319 severely economically distressed counties identified by the Appalachian Regional Commission based upon data taken from the 1990 Census. Nine initial pilot colleges
were chosen in 1994, and an additional 15 were added in 1996. Apart from RCCI, Stephen G. Katsinas and Vincent A. Lacey developed a classification scheme of US public community colleges. An updated version of those community colleges classifications based upon the 2000 Census is presented in the following chart, “US Rural Publicly-Controlled Two-Year Colleges by Katsinas, Lacey, and Hardy Classification Type.”
Figure 3.
This chart shows there are 957 total campuses, 553 districts with 867 campuses, and 90 Two-Year under Four-Year. There are 217 large sized rural community college campuses meaning they have more than 7,500 annual unduplicated headcount, 499 medium sized rural community college campuses with annual unduplicated headcount between 2,500 and 7,500, and 206 small sized rural community colleges with annual unduplicated headcount below 2,500 (Katsinas, Lacey, & Hardy, 2004).

Building Upon the Failed Rural Development Strategies of the Past

The RCCI examined the historic problems facing rural America as being centered on two issues, citizenry with a lack of skills and limited regional economic opportunities. It viewed the place-based rural community and Tribal colleges as key partners to reduce poverty because these institutions could help blend solutions of increasing citizen’s skills and increasing regional economic development. This idea of multiple entities working together for the common good was sometimes much more difficult to put into practice than it appeared. The areas these colleges served were often referred to as “broken communities,” because of the deep rifts between groups (MDC, 1986).

George Autry created a “Cycle of Development” that speaks to the issue of economic development and sustainable communities.
George Autry’s Cycle of Development

Data Source: MDC Inc.

Used with permission from MDC, Inc.
In this cycle, the activities of successful communities are divided into three areas: good jobs, healthy community investment, and strong communities. Good jobs mean people have more money, and both they, and the business they work for are able to spend more in the local economy. When people have greater income, they have more wealth, when businesses have more capital, they can expand. This in turn allows for a larger investment in the community through taxes and charitable contributions, which help both public and nonprofit institutions, grow stronger and more effective. Stronger communities follow from increased investments by the citizenry. When the citizens are better educated, they are more likely to demand and be willing to pay for increased community amenities, and are more likely to be invested in creating a better future for their community (MDC, 2002, pp. 11-12).

Rural economic development, community service, and access must all work cohesively together to bring about positive change, MDC argued. If the local economy is weak, the high school and college graduates will leave to find better jobs. This continued “brain drain” is extremely detrimental to any local area. Thus the system of poverty is perpetuated by the cycle of no jobs, out-migration, and less and less economic development (MDC, 1986). By linking access to college to improve the number of graduates with economic development to help spur a more prosperous local economy, distressed regions can maintain and even attract talented individuals into their areas (Eller et. al., 2003). If this tide of out-migration of talent starts to change, then the area has the potential for more local taxing revenue to help support the college which can then put that money back into the local economy (Katsinas, Alexander, & Opp, 2003). In the best relationship between rural colleges and economic development, this creation of a stronger work force and local revenues creates a sustainable, win-win scenario for regions so long accustomed to lose-lose relationships (Katsinas, 1989).
A long-held belief for rural economic development has the chase for the “big one.” The large manufacturing jobs that America once had before are now hemorrhaging due to cheap foreign labor. This mindset of the "big one" is the cornerstone of a lose-loses relationship for numerous reasons. First, it creates a climate of extreme rivalry among the competing local counties. This divide and conquer technique ensures that while one area or county may win, the region as a whole will lose. Second, to entice the development of the manufacturing jobs, they must offer reduced tax breaks and other incentives they cannot afford, which in turn inhibits the local schools and other public entities from offering high quality services. Lastly, these plants or factories in the end do not produce enough good jobs to begin satisfy the local need for gainful employment (MDC, 2002).

Knowing this, MDC officials wanted the RCCI to help shift rural development philosophy and programming toward the goals of strengthening and expanding the local economy, instead of concentrating on bringing in large manufacturers from the outside. Micro-enterprising and small business loans would take the place of “landing the big one” and the rural community and Tribal colleges could partner with their local business communities to help provide the training and development they needed, thus growing their workforce (Eller et. al, 2003).

In turn, this would help to ensure that local dollars could be generated, spent, and turned over in the local economy. The idea of maintaining “local dollars in the local economy” was very important to the evolving RCCI program. A major push to emphasize the creation and spending of money in the local and regionally economy was made, along with attracting external money through the promotion of the sales of handicrafts and other local specialties. The people from the areas served by these rural community and Tribal colleges were rich in indigenous fine
arts, a major strength to be capitalized upon. The availability of unrestricted planning and program funding from the Ford Foundation in turn would free up institutional funds for these cash-poor institutions to move forward new projects, and allow the leveraging of funds for additional new grants (Eller et. al., 2003). All of this helped to put more power back into the hands of the local leadership, who then would have new options available besides prostituting their precious natural resources for outside exploitation.

The cornerstones of the RCCI’s philosophies were increasing access to education and regional economic development, through the development of strong community partnerships to foster change. Thus, the RCCI philosophy is built on trust and cooperation. In Sarah Rubin’s (2001) “Community Colleges as Catalyst for Change” she reiterates the six key roles played by community colleges participating in RCCI. Rubin begins with the colleges’ responsibility to mobilize regional leadership for economic development. She notes that community colleges must be at the center of a regional workforce development system, and stay attuned to employer’s changing needs. She urges them to remain committed to promoting technology transfer and the economic competitiveness of their region. She also charges the colleges to promote entrepreneurship and small business development, and believes colleges must develop programs that target poor people while creating jobs and continue to encourage a strong education ethic among the population they serve. All six of Rubin's premises (2001) lead back into the two aforementioned ideals, increased access and regional economic development.

These ideas to impart change did not come with preconceived notions of success. Indeed, a key point of the RCCI was to bring together folks who had not worked together before (or worked well together before), to develop ideas that were out of the ordinary and "out of the box." The framework created by the RCCI and the MDC staff was simply that, a framework. It was an
empty canvas that each individual college in close cooperation with its regional team was to
draw upon to generate their own new ideas of what was possible for the betterment of their
regions. The RCCI staff provided each college with what they called a “Vision to Action”
approach to problem solving and planning. Attention is now turned to a description of MDC's
Vision to Action, which became RCCI's operating philosophy.

RCCI’s Operating Philosophy: Vision to Action

Based on his thirty years of experience with the southern United States, the late George
Autry believed the key ingredient lacking in rural America was an appropriate investment in
human capital. Autry strongly believed a strengthening of workforce training and increased
access to higher education would be a good starting point for improved success (Eller et al.,
2003). The Ford Foundation staff also believed that rural community and Tribal colleges were
well placed to serve as catalysts for economic development in these distressed regions. All five
of these high poverty regions, Appalachia, Lower Mississippi Delta, Texas Border Region, Four
Corners of the Southwest, and the High Plains Region of Montana were faced with similar
problems of a brain drain, as their most talented citizens left because of a consistent lack of
opportunity. If rural community and Tribal colleges can improve the skills of the citizenry while
also working to expand economic opportunities in the region, then these areas would be on a
pathway toward success (Eller et al., 2003).

From the beginning, the RCCI staff wanted to change the way the colleges and indeed the
regions viewed themselves. The RCCI was about community colleges as “catalysts” for change.
The use of the term catalyst is itself intriguing, and has a long history in the literature of
community colleges. Raymond J. Young in 1973 suggested that community colleges could serve
as catalysts for community development, a point seconded by Katsinas and Lacey in their 1989
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges' monograph, *Economic Development and Community Colleges: Models of Institutional Effectiveness*, which went into a second printing in 1991 (Katsinas and Lacey, 1989, 1991). While Sarah Rubin’s (2001) “Rural Colleges as Catalysts for Community Change” made no mention of the prior works from the community college literature, it still was one of the first summaries of the RCCI process and experience. Just as the use of the word catalyst implies, the idea behind RCCI was not to overshadow what was naturally occurring, it was to speed up that process. Every college that participated with RCCI had good things happening; those good things were simply being overwhelmed by the history of need in their regions. The Ford Foundation hoped to provide financing and technical assistance to the pilot rural community and Tribal colleges as “catalytic” ingredients to help them internally better serve their regions. Ford brought seed grants, expanded professional staff development and travel opportunities to the table, while MDC brought its Vision to Action philosophy and technical assistance. The institutions themselves benefited, because participation in an internationally recognized major foundation program brought them credibility which in turn brought a higher institutional profile that often was leveraged into increased grant funding. Taken together, the RCCI attempted to help participating pilot colleges to go from a “give them a fish” ideology, to “we can fish for ourselves."

George Autry’s two-pronged approach of increased training of the workforce and increased workforce opportunities was the most logical way to break decade’s long cycles of poverty (MDC, 1986). The old welfare system of giving people assistance without opportunities for improving themselves had done little to alleviate the suffering of the poor. With an open approach to access for education and training and an opportunity to find a job in the area with a living wage goes so much further in changing people’s lives.
This bifurcated approach to ending historic regional rural poverty seeks to attack the problem at its source. If an area has a better-trained workforce, then the jobs can come to the region, if job prospects improve, the residents who wish to stay in the area can afford to do so. The traditional approach to these issues had been much more along the lines of “someone from the outside giving the local people fish.” The dependence on assistance has had the unintended negative consequence of both decreasing regional self-reliance and discrediting local culture. This outsider’s approach has also worked to stifle local problem solving. The RCCI wanted to reverse this trend by asking the locals to develop local solutions to regional problems. RCCI wanted leaders seeking to think beyond the traditional methods of outside assistance, and reliance on a sales outflow of natural resources. The RCCI two-prong approach to increased access for education and regional economic development worked to make sure not only that people knew how to fish for themselves (education), the RCCI wanted to make sure that most importantly there would be fish in the pond for people to catch (regional economic development).

In the Vision to Action Toolkit created by MDC for the pilot RCCI colleges and regional teams, a philosophical approach was offered as a means to assess where communities/regions were, and where they wanted to go. It was a simple and straightforward approach that asked participants to take an honest look at their current situation, and to dream about what could be changed for the better in the future. The Vision to Action process was one that incorporates a series of eight steps that are cyclical in nature, each of which is explained below.

The first point in Vision to Action was “Data Collection and Analysis.” In stage one of Data Collection and Analysis, the team was called upon to collect and process raw data on their area, so they could be sure of the realities of their region. They were encouraged to look at data
from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the US Census Bureau, local workforce and economic development boards, etc. The process of looking for data could lead into future partnerships with agencies, and allow groups to gain understanding as to how data told regional stories to solidify key internal and external understandings. The internal and external issues were then explored in a SWOT analysis approach. SWOT stood for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Strengths and Weaknesses were internal to the college or community, and are things over which the college had some control including but not limited to the quality of faculty, increased technical course offerings as strengths, and high underemployment and school drop out rates as weaknesses. Opportunities and threats were things external to the college where it had little or no control, such as increased federal and state focus on improving rural areas as an opportunity, and global competition as a threat. After areas had been identified, each RCCI pilot college community team was then charged with analysis of the data, so that the central question of “where are we” could be answered.

The second step in Vision to Action was to “Describe the Current Situation.” The central point here was to answer the question of “Where are we now?” After taking the knowledge gained from the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analyses the team could now start to develop lists of concerns for what currently exists and needs to be changed in the future. This helped to create identifiable goal statements that could be actualized and measured. It also started the process of using data to drive goals and decisions. These could then be arranged on a priority basis. The team also matched up strengths and opportunities and could more readily identify weaknesses and threats that could interfere with success. All of this helped to build up and clarify the team’s idea of where they currently existed.
The third step was “Visioning.” The key point of this stage was the answer the question of “Where would we like to be?” By building off the data developed from stage one, and the picture of where we were in stage two; stage three was the natural progression of thoughts into the future. In this stage, the team was challenged to think beyond their current state. They were asked to dream about what could be possible for the region. Together the team created a vision statement of what they would like their community to resemble in the future. The vision statement was meant to capture a motivating picture of what “could be” in the future if things that were valued were given merit.

The fourth step was to “Set Goals.” The central point of this stage was to answer the question of “What outcomes must we achieve to make our vision a reality?” Goals are used to take the more ephemeral ideals from the vision statement and make them into concrete and measurable actions. When the group had achieved the goals, the vision became a reality. Setting goals was the way to operationalize the previous steps. The goals must be realistic and measurable, and were meant for usage as platforms upon which to build a better future for the college and the region as a whole.

The fifth step was to “Develop Strategies.” The central point of this stage was to answer the question of “How do we make our goals achievable?” Strategies were both broad in scope, such as increasing available small business investment capital in the region, to more specific such as establishing a day-care center on campus. The strategies must have been all inclusive in their approach, explaining what was required to bring the goals to fruition including resources such as money, time commitments, materials, office space, etc. Development of strategies was broken down into three distinct phases, Force Field Analysis, Research, and Strategy Selection.
Force Field Analysis was the first step incorporated in this process. It was a way to identify potential positive and negative forces that can potentially impact the successful outcome of the strategy. Force Field Analysis helped to shape discussion of strategy in a way that was both holistic in its sight and understanding of the environment, and increased the chances of success.

Strategy Analysis Research was crucial in helping to determine what had worked for others and what had not. This research phase allowed the group to learn from others success and failures and helps groups to not find that their hard work had only lead to reinventing an “unsuccessful wheel.”

Strategy Selection was the final stage where key strategies were selected. The selection process was one that should have been a culmination of the previous steps. The strategies that were chosen should have been both reasonable in number, and of the highest impact. They should also work progressively and support each other. The final selected strategies should resemble an orchestra working together with the group serving as the conductor.

The sixth step in Vision to Action was to “Analyze Stakeholders Influence.” Here stakeholders were “individuals, groups of people, or organizations with a direct stake in the outcomes you are seeking—both goals and strategies (MDC, 1998, p. 46). In this stage, the group examined the interests of others and the influences they may have had on the goals of the group. The stakeholders' influence must be understood so the group can understand how “strong or weak opposition or support really was,” (MDC, 1998, p.46). This helped the group to better prepare for actions and reactions that happened in the future.

The seventh step was to “Plan for Funding and Sustainability.” The central question of this stage was, “What was our cost for the strategies and who will pay for them, both in the short
and long term?” Funding from RCCI was seen as "seed funding," and would last for only a short period to be used to leverage additional alternative funding over the eight years of the RCCI program. This part of the process was meant to bring the goals and strategies in line with what can actually be done. While dreaming big was highly encouraged, under-anticipating costs and optimistically planning for excess funds was a recipe for failure. This seventh stage built on the previous ones, by helping teams to realistically plan for the costs of achieving the strategies they have deemed as crucial to their region’s success. Since the monies that come from Ford were limited, it was important to assist the pilot colleges in developing strategies for sustaining the innovations well before the strategies are put into action. The team was encouraged to look both at a short term plan over two years and a much longer term sustainability plan, in order to better ensure the prospect of continual success.

The eighth step was to “Plan for Action.” The central question at this stage was “Who will do what and when?” This stage was where the planning merged with reality, and the team decided what programs would be created and how that process would happen. The basics of What, Who, When, and How were incorporated together to create the plan that the team would follow. The team was encouraged think holistically by incorporating multiple goals when feasible. Each of the parts of What, Who, When and How must have been addressed for the team to have success.

The final step in Vision to Action was step nine, “Plan an Evaluation.” The central question of this stage was “How would we know when we have achieved our goals?” Although the evaluation would not occur until the end of the implementation, it must be created and identified at the beginning of the process. The team must decide what would be a measure of success to say they have achieved their goals. The plan must have included benchmarks to
demonstrate the success of implementations to constituents, backing up claims with facts. The evaluation process was cyclical in nature, and was designed to be truly never ending. Anytime a new program was created, an evaluation plan was developed, so that its value could be both determined and shared objectively with others. The administrative leadership of Southwest Texas Junior College involved in the Vision to Action process reported back to the Ford Foundation in their Three Year Continuation Grant (1997) report that MDC's Vision to Action was an exciting process, and one of the most beneficial planning activities in which the College had ever participated.

Southwest Texas Junior College and the RCCI

In August of 1994, while serving as a domestic consultant for the Ford Foundation, Stephen G. Katsinas, then a professor of Higher Education at Oklahoma State University, made his first visit to Southwest Texas Junior College and Uvalde. His purpose was to interview College officials—especially SWTJC President Billy Word and community leaders—to assess the College’s suitability for participation in the Ford Foundation’s soon-to-be-announced Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). Katsinas wrote an extensive set of unpublished notes that totaled approximately 30 pages of double-space typewritten text. It was from these site visits and notes that SWTJC was invited by the Ford Foundation to become one of the original nine pilot college participants in the RCCI.

The RCCI project had lofty goals and honest ambitions. A cornerstone ideal was moving a region out of poverty, and to accomplish this, the region must begin to be able to take care of itself. The ideals of micro-lending, small business development, and an increased access to education, work symbiotically to help to create a better-trained and equipped workforce (Eller, et. al, 2003). Coupling this with a regional approach to problem solving, the RCCI project
wanted to help move the colleges forward, much like trading in that old “beater” car that sometimes gets you where you need to go, for a nice reliable mid-sized sedan. Nothing too flashy, just something that can get the job done well.

President Word (and in turn the College) was very well connected in Uvalde and Eagle Pass, but not in Del Rio. The vast geographic distances and the general lack of a larger regional focus, coupled with an absence of professional knowledge about workforce training and continuing education was hampering the College. Katsinas wrote that President Word was eager to learn new ways of doing things, and that he appeared to possess a capable staff. But Katsinas noted that like many rural community colleges he had previously visited, SWTJC was at a loss for real professional expertise in this area. He recommended to the Ford Foundation that the problems associated with the lack of knowledge capacity be taken seriously. He suggested the need for specialized assistance for the College, but also to get the Colleges’ staff out to see other institutions, and to learn from their experiences.

There was an old adage about “throwing money at problems to make them go away.” As much as anyone who was poor loves the opportunity to gain increased access to money, the lure and thrill of it was often never enough to truly change tragic situations. And the situation Katsinas found in his first visit to the Middle Rio Grande region of the United States in 1994 was tragic. This author kept coming back to the challenge of accessing significant unrestricted funds as a continuing challenge for the RCCI colleges. Small rural colleges suffer from lack of economies of scale, and lack “free capital” to leverage for grants or to invest in new programs and initiatives (Katsinas, Alexander, & Opp, 2003). With their tightly stretched budgets, one of the first “luxuries” to go was often staff development, particularly in any economic downturn.
The RCCI helped to alleviate both of these issues with the seed money grants, and the extensive site visits to other pilot institutions participating in the RCCI.

Like many poorer areas, the fight for precious few resources created a climate that was very tolerant of turfism and balkanization. Katsinas wrote that to change this area for the better they (regional leadership) must start to view themselves more with a regionalist mindset instead of as competitors for programs and services. This single mindedness as he called it, translated across all areas, from economic development and beyond. To get the region to view itself as a region would be a major task during the College’s involvement with RCCI. Along this same line, the extensive site visits to other RCCI colleges proved to be real “eye-openers” for the SWTJC team.

These site visits to other institutions were crucial, because for the first time a team of regional leaders from southwest Texas, along with SWTJC administrative leaders, were able to go as a group to visit other high-poverty serving rural community and Tribal colleges, in regions such as Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta. The group from southwest Texas found that while they had previously felt there were numerous differences and unique needs in their region, after the site visits they saw how much they actually had in common with other high poverty regions of the country. It was similar to what an American experiences on vacation in Europe when meeting another American. When a Texan is stateside, he or she may not feel especially close to someone from New York. Put them both in a coffeehouse in Vienna, however, and they can find a multitude of similarities. When a regions’ leadership comes together like bickering siblings, which many of the RCCI participants compared themselves too, they do not see how much they are hurting themselves to get “what THEY wanted.” When RCCI put these regional teams together for visits to other institutions, many committed on the numerous epiphanies they had
about each other and their region while away from home. When they returned, they could see their region much more as a region, and not as the competing parts, as they had seen each other before.

Through participation in the RCCI, SWTJC's leadership was able to convene meetings of key citizens from Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Uvalde, and other cities in the region to discuss rural issues on a larger regional basis, while creating a regional leadership team to address identified problems. Not only did this process bring together people who previously had not been talking to each other, the planning activities thrust SWTJC into a new regional leadership role. It was this regional leadership team that traveled to other RCCI regions and began SWTJC’s Vision to Action process.

The College also received a great deal of technical support from RCCI. Each of the nine RCCI pilot colleges were assigned an MDC “coach” charged with getting the ball rolling in RCCI activities, and to help the colleges to enter into RCCI phase one activity. SWTJC’s Coach, Dr. Ray Sandoval, was seen as a tremendous help to SWTJC. His assistance and guidance was credited with helping the College to begin its RCCI-funded programming "started off on the right foot."

The RCCI money was intended to be used to leverage greater access to capital and grants to extend RCCI activities identified by the participating colleges. The funding signaled to those outside the colleges, such as the state coordinating boards for higher education, state workforce commissions, and public officials that someone important (the Ford Foundation) had taken a direct and keen interest in the colleges and the regions they serve. Part of the magic behind the RCCI though, was never so much about the money that they offered to the pilot colleges, since SWTJC’s $15 to $20 million general operating budget paled by comparison. The 1994 RCCI
Planning Grants of $30,000, the 1995 Implementation Grants of $150,000, and the 1997 Continuation Grants of $100,000 were about creating an attitude inside and outside of the College that changed the way the region perceived itself (Burchfield, 1998, p.15). Indeed, after my first trip to the College in May of 2002, the phrase “increased credibility because of our association with Ford” kept coming up in each of my interviews.
CHAPTER 4
EXPANDING ACCESS: STUDENTS AND GROWING EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

A key goal for the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) was to increase access to educational opportunities in historically poor regions of the United States. For Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) this meant not only serving the students already enrolled in the College, but also to seek out those who had not been provided services, and engage them as well. It is clear that SWTJC has shown remarkable progress in achieving this goal. The regional mindset for providing service is prominently and proudly displayed on the cover of the 2003-2005 SWTJC Course Catalogue, which on page five stated, “Regional and Proud of it!”

The Access Challenge Prior to RCCI

In his 1994 and 1995 site visits, Katsinas discussed the issues related to creating access to higher education opportunities in SWTJC service areas. He wrote, “The College faces daunting challenges in addressing access, some of which are related to culture and economics, others related to structural weaknesses in how the State of Texas funds its community colleges and in particular how it address facilities needs (Katsinas, 1994, p.2). He then presented some disturbing figures, “Within its service area, only 9.6% of adults 25 years of age and over possess baccalaureate degrees, compared to a statewide average of 11.6%. It was even worse for the Hispanic population, whose percentages are lower at 6.4%.” Katsinas, citing College officials, found about 35% of the students attending SWTJC in 1994 had at least one parent who never attended high school (Katsinas, 1994, p.2).
Katsinas found strong community support for the College, among both Hispanics and Anglos. He indicated meeting 30 community leaders, college faculty, college staff, two trustees, a local state representative, two school superintendents, numerous private sector leaders, and the two local bank presidents in his mid-1990s site visits. He also met with community leaders in Del Rio. From these meetings, it was his impression that the past legacy of racism in the region had dissipated among the Anglo business and community leadership. Katsinas also felt from these meetings that the support of the community was behind the College and its programs and services. This created the optimism on his part that the College, as President Word stated, was “ready to make a quantum leap in the number of programs and services” it is able to deliver (Katsinas, 1994, p.2).

In the early 1990s, the College struggled to deliver programs and services to its vast service area. The three main branches of SWTJC form a triangle, with considerable distance between each of them to deliver courses and programs. The main campus is in Uvalde, while Eagle Pass was approximately 65 miles to the south, and Del Rio was approximately 70 miles to the west. Katsinas wrote, “No other community college in Texas attempts to deliver educational resources in an area this large” (Katsinas, 1994, p.2). At that time of his mid-1990’s visits, the College was running an extensive bus system to enable students from the most isolated and economically depressed areas to attend the College in Uvalde. President Word told Katsinas, “Students here value the opportunity to attend college. Some will get up at 4:30 in the morning to make the bus trip, which itself can take an hour and one-half. These people out here desperately desire access to postsecondary opportunities because they are beginning to realize how it can change their lives” (Katsinas, 1994, p.2).
The Access Challenge in Southwest Texas Today: Progress and Prospects

Enrollment has nearly doubled from 1994 until 2005, and access, as measured by where those new students are coming from, has been extended across the College’s vast state-assigned service area. SWTJC’s willingness to take on the challenge of extending access to educational opportunities to some of Texas’ most underserved citizens speaks to the commitment and dedication of Southwest Texas Junior College’s faculty and staff. As past President Billy Word said, “it (educational and training opportunities) must be done by us, because no one else out here can do it, and our citizens are desperately crying out with need” (Personal Communication, May 2002). In the mid-1990’s, a consistent finding of Katsinas’ site visit was the perception that SWTJC was “Uvalde’s College,” and not the college for the region. With the new facilities constructed in Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and the additions of new facilities to Crystal City, this perception is changing. Citizens in those areas are starting to view the branch campuses in Del Rio and Eagle Pass as THEIR college. Former SWTJC President Billy Word hoped involvement with the Ford Foundation could help SWTJC to “jump start” the facilities construction process, and change the view to see SWTJC as the College for the Middle Rio Grande region. It appears that this had happened by 2003.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe quantitatively and qualitatively how SWTJC has extended access to students, and expanded educational partnerships as it has transformed itself from a local Junior College in Uvalde to the region’s comprehensive Community College. This chapter is organized as follows: Expanding Access to Become the Region's College, Serving Needy Students at Southwest Texas Junior College, Building Educational Partnerships Across the Region, A Partnership to Keep Young People in the Educational Pipeline, Building Educational Partnerships with Universities, SWTJC Student Voices, Residence Halls: A Key
Component of Student Life at a Rural Community College, and Operationalizing a Student-Centered Philosophy.

Expanding Access to Become the Region’s College

The vastness of the College’s service area cannot be overstated; some of the residents in the college’s service area are as far as 300 miles from a campus (Katsinas, 1994, p.1). Quoting Cohen and Brawer’s statement, “For many students, the choice is not between a community college and another institution; the choice is between a community college and nothing” (Katsinas, 1994, p.2). Katsinas in 1994 noted that this statement certainly applies to SWTJC, where most of the students enrolled are first generation, and over 60% of them receive Pell Grants. He also noted that the nearest four-year campus was in San Antonio, a little less than a two hour drive by automobile.

Enrollment at SWTJC grew at an annual rate of approximately 7% from 1990-1994. The enrollment at the Eagle Pass Study Center, opened in 1973-74, increased from 450 students in the fall of 1985 to 623 students in the fall of 1993. The enrollment at the Del Rio Study Center, opened in 1975, increased 70% from 1991-1994. The Fall 1993 enrollment at Del Rio was 729 (Burchfield, 1994). As shall be seen below, these initial enrollments were very small compared to what would be found a decade later, after the College's participation in RCCI.

SWTJC Spring 1994 enrollment of 3,064 students, of whom approximately 70% were Hispanic, was reflective of the ethnic makeup of the region’s population. Through its "open door" admission policy, the college acknowledges its purpose to identify and fulfill academic needs of the students through individualized programs of testing, interviewing, counseling, and teaching. In addition, it provides for the postsecondary education needs of the surrounding communities through out-of-taxing district, in service delivery area study centers in Eagle Pass.
and Del Rio, and through an extensive evening course program located in the surrounding communities on an as-needed basis.

There can be no question as to the great growth of SWTJC’s enrollment at its expanding branch campuses in Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Crystal City. As Chart V-A “Southwest Texas Junior College Fall Enrollment 1981-2004” shows, fall unduplicated headcount enrollment has grown dramatically from the Fall of 1994 to 2004. In the Fall of 1994, 3,139 students were enrolled; by the Fall of 2004, 5,140 were enrolled. This was an increase over eleven years of 64%. Over the same period, annual unduplicated headcount—the total number of human beings served by the College grew from 4,484 in the 1994-1995 academic year, to 6,693 in 2003-2004, an increase of 49%. As shall be shown, a wider range of more comprehensive student services and academic programs are being offered at each Southwest Texas Junior College campus, and the growth of the branch campuses has not negatively impacted enrollment at the main campus in Uvalde.

Between 1995 and 2000, a total of 112 counties in Texas were represented in the enrollment of Southwest Texas Junior College. The total enrollment over this six-year period was 20,472. Of the 20,472 total enrollments, only 627 or 3 percent were from counties outside of the SWTJC taxing-district/state-assigned service delivery area. Nearly all of the students—97% or 19,845 of the 20,472 total, were from the eleven counties in the state assigned service delivery area of the College (Burchfield, 2000-2001).
Chart IV-A
Southwest Texas Junior College
Enrollment 1981-2004 (Fall Semester)

Data Source: SWTJC Institutional Research Office and CBM091, 2004
Chart IV-B, “Enrollment Expressed in Credit Contact Hours, In-Taxing District and Out-
of-Taxing District, In-State-Assigned Service Delivery Area at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1999-00 to 2003-04,” shows the transformation of the College from an institution only for Uvalde to an institution that serves a broader region. In 1999-00, the fourth year of SWTJC’s participation in RCCI, more contact hours were generated from students residing in SWTJC’s three original taxing district counties-- Real, Uvalde, and Zavala-- than from the other eight counties combined. Those figures were 767,200 and 767,120, respectively or 51% compared to 49%. By 2003-04, 821,664 credit hours were generated from the original three taxing district counties, and 1,082,704 were generated from the other eight state-assigned counties, a ratio of 43% to 56%. Since 70% of the population in SWTJC’s service area lives outside the original three taxing district counties, this strongly suggests the College has been able to expand the access to higher education it provides, one of the two key RCCI goals.

It is also very important to note that SWTJC system wide enrollment growth has not come at the expense of the Uvalde Campus. Table V-B shows that a total of 1,534,320 credits were generated in 1999-2000. This figure grew to 1,904,368 across all SWTJC locations in 2003-2004, an increase of 24%. In this same time period, in-taxing district enrollment grew from 797,200 credits generated in 1999-00 to 821,664 in 2003-04, and increase of 3 percent. These data should help ameliorate fears that as the College grows to better serve its entire region, Uvalde remains well-served too.
Table 1

**Chart V-B**

*Enrollment Expressed in Credit Contact Hours, In-Taxing District and Out-of-Taxing District, In-State-Assigned Service Delivery Area at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1999-00 to 2003-04*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999/00</th>
<th>2000/01</th>
<th>2001/02</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>1 Year % Change</th>
<th>3 Year % Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-taxing district</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>384,224</td>
<td>377,232</td>
<td>351,152</td>
<td>368,624</td>
<td>417,728</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>357,520</td>
<td>348,480</td>
<td>334,288</td>
<td>379,696</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer I</td>
<td>33,520</td>
<td>29,104</td>
<td>51,312</td>
<td>49,936</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.7%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer II</td>
<td>21,936</td>
<td>17,120</td>
<td>32,432</td>
<td>23,408</td>
<td></td>
<td>-27.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>797,200</td>
<td>771,936</td>
<td>769,184</td>
<td>821,664</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Out-of taxing district, In State Assigned Service Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>330,000</td>
<td>363,264</td>
<td>376,784</td>
<td>470,944</td>
<td>530,766</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>366,288</td>
<td>362,336</td>
<td>385,712</td>
<td>477,584</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer I</td>
<td>39,136</td>
<td>50,368</td>
<td>67,216</td>
<td>80,480</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>105.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer II</td>
<td>31,696</td>
<td>27,520</td>
<td>37,584</td>
<td>53,696</td>
<td></td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>767,120</td>
<td>803,488</td>
<td>869,296</td>
<td>1,082,704</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td>1,564,320</td>
<td>1,575,424</td>
<td>1,638,480</td>
<td>1,904,368</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: THEBC - Prep Query System Report, SWTJC Fact Book 2003-2004
Chart IV-C “Enrollment Expressed in Contact Hours by Type of Programs at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1993-94 to 2003-04,” shows the significant growth of all types of programs during the period in which the College as involved with in RCCI. Total contact hours grow from 1,399,432 in 1993-94, the year immediately prior to SWTJC’s involvement in RCCI, to 2,133,248 in 2003-04. The additional 733,816 credit hours generated represent a 52% increase in eleven years.

Chart IV-C also shows academic contact hours for transfer and technical vocational contact hours for SWTJC programs leading to direct employment in the area. Both saw significant growth over the time of the College’s involvement in RCCI. Academic credit contact hours grew from 1,009,856 in 1993-94, the year immediately prior to SWTJC involvement in RCCI, to 1,639,408 in 2003-04, an increase of 62%. Technical credit contact hours grew from 389,576 to 493,840, an increase of 104,264 or 27% from 1993-94 to 2003-04. The increase in both for-credit academic and technical programs presented in Chart V-C is of critical importance to those practitioners and policymakers familiar with the intricacies of community college finance.

There is little doubt that SWTJC takes its vocational educational activities seriously, and that they have the highest level of support at the College. In a 2002 interview, the President of SWTJC’s Board of Trustees, Rodolfo Flores spoke about his commitment to vocational education. He said, “I feel strongly about vocational education and see it as an important part of meeting local needs. We must never forget that vocational education is also part of our mission.”

As Katsinas, Alexander, and Opp (2003) reported, the higher cost of technical programs at many community college, such as allied health, nursing, and engineering technology, are often run as “loss leaders.” If the community colleges lack sufficient enrollments in lower-cost
academic/general education for transfer programs, it is much more difficult even in good
economic times for rural community colleges to pay for/subsidize those programs. Thus, the
consistent and significant growth of the academic programs supports the expansion of technical
programs, as rural community colleges are able to offer more comprehensive curriculum with
greater breadth and depth.
### Chart IV-C

*Enrollment Expressed in Contact Hours by Type of Programs at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1993-94 to 2003-04*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Academic CHR</th>
<th>Technical CHR</th>
<th>Total CHR</th>
<th>1 Year % Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993/1994</td>
<td>1,009,856</td>
<td>389,576</td>
<td>1,399,432</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/1995</td>
<td>1,041,264</td>
<td>420,831</td>
<td>1,462,095</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/1996</td>
<td>1,032,032</td>
<td>439,217</td>
<td>1,471,249</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/1997</td>
<td>1,047,120</td>
<td>449,112</td>
<td>1,496,232</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998</td>
<td>1,146,736</td>
<td>459,592</td>
<td>1,606,328</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999</td>
<td>1,148,080</td>
<td>444,144</td>
<td>1,592,224</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>1,129,872</td>
<td>434,448</td>
<td>1,564,320</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>1,202,096</td>
<td>373,328</td>
<td>1,575,424</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>1,252,556</td>
<td>365,824</td>
<td>1,638,380</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>1,446,576</td>
<td>457,792</td>
<td>1,904,368</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>1,639,408</td>
<td>493,840</td>
<td>2,133,248</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Annual Contact Hours

Data Source: SWTJC Fact Book 2003-2004
Chart IV-D, “Annual Unduplicated Headcount by Academic Term (Fall, Spring, Summer) at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1999-00 to 2003-04,” shows a pattern of consistent growth across all academic terms. It is significant that in two of the five years presented Spring term enrollments was actually larger than in the corresponding Fall terms (1999-00 and 2002-03). This fact, and the overall growth in unduplicated headcount of 34% over the same period, suggests the College has significantly extended access that it provides to better reach both traditional and non-traditional aged students.
Table 3

Chart V-D
Annual Duplicated Headcount and Unduplicated Headcount by Academic Term (Fall, Spring, and Summer) at Southwest Texas Junior College, 1999-00 to 2003-04

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>771</td>
<td>927</td>
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<td>Academic Year</td>
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<td>Duplicated Headcount</td>
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<td>Academic Year Unduplicated Headcount</td>
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</table>

Source: THECB Annual Certified CBMI/HEIR Reports

Data Source: SWTJC Fact Book 2003-2004
Serving Needy Students

Students enrolled in 1994, at the beginning of SWTJC’s involvement with RCCI, faced a very tough reality of how much attending college was going to cost. For students enrolled today, the rising cost of tuition, is not only tough, it is frightening. Higher education costs in the United States have skyrocketed in the past ten years, increasing at almost twice the rate of inflation (Katsinas, Alexander, Opp, 2003.) In 1994, tuition and fees for a student enrolled in twelve hours at SWTJC who resided in one of the three taxing counties was $249. In 2005, tuition for that same student taking twelve hours is $535.00, an increase of 115%! The maximum Pell grant in 1994 was $2,200. Today the maximum Pell awarded is $4,025, an increase of only 82%. This does not take into account the higher gas prices and other cost of living expenses—a $0.79 gallon of gas is an era long past!

The situation for students who come from the eight remaining counties that are out of taxing-district, but in the state-assigned-service area, are even graver. A student from Del Rio or Eagle Pass for example, would have paid $321 in 1994 for twelve hours of courses at SWTJC. Today that same student would pay $733 for twelve hours, an increase of 128% over 11 years (SWTJC Financial Aid Office, 2005). Clearly, financial aid assistance has not kept pace with the rising costs of tuition.

The College has continued to do its best to serve students in terms of delivering financial aid. The number of Pell grants awarded to SWTJC students rose from 1,100 in 1994 to 3,075 in 2005, a 180% increase. The College has also been active in helping students to receive Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) with an increase from 160 awarded in 1994, to 352 in 2005. That is an increase in SEOG awarded of 120%. College Work Study...
money awarded to SWTJC students raised from $160,189 in 1994, to $218,750 in 2005, an increase of 36%.

The College has also looked to the State of Texas for financial aid help in the form of the Texas Grant Program. While this program did not exist in 1994, in 2004-2005 students attending SWTJC received 257 of these grants, with a total value of $288,086.

Sadly, the largest increases in student financial aid from 1994 to 2004 have come in the form of Stafford Loans. In 1994, SWTJC students received 150 Stafford Loans worth $250,000. In 2004, SWTJC students received 464 Stafford Loans worth $1,017,249. That is a 209% increase in the number of loans awarded, and a 306% increase in the value of those of loans. The narrowing gap between the value of Pell awards and the dramatic increases in tuition and fees has shifted many needy students toward loans, who now see them as the only viable option to attend college.

During my third visit to the campus in May of 2005, I attended the monthly Dean’s meetings. Typically the meeting involves the President, Ismael Sosa, the three Deans of the College, Dean of Instruction, Hector Gonzales, Dean of Institutional Technology and Advancement, Blaine Bennett, and Dean of Student Services, Joe Barker. Also, the Associate Deans of the Branch Campuses in Del Rio and Eagle Pass attend. This group meets at least once a month on the Wednesday before the Thursday night Board meeting. At this particular meeting Dean Gonzales had requested Barrett Miller, the Director of the Business Office, to also attend. The rationale for asking Mr. Miller to come to the meeting was to discuss one aspect of the financial picture at the College, the Pioneer Loan Program. This is a program the College started about twenty years ago to forgive tuition and fees of students to cover the gap between the start
of the semester and the time that financial aid money arrives. When the student’s Financial Aid awards arrive, they repay the College for their owed tuition and fees.

The Pioneer Loan Program has seen a major increase in use during the past ten years. The College has a fund balance in the Pioneer Loan account of about $60,000, and can only loan out as much as exists in the account. At the time of the meeting I attended, the College had loaned out in excess of twice that amount, or approximately $120,000. The College had loaned out so much money and has seen so many students default on their loans that it was forced to put the breaks on this home-grown loan program. In a telephone interview in July of 2005, Barrett Milling, Director of the Business Office, indicated the College still has the Pioneer Loan Program, however SWTJC officials are today more selective about deciding which students are allowed to participate.

The author's site visits cause him to believe that the College has been very prudent in its financial dealings, almost miserly in its approach to spending, and yet in this particular situation SWTJC has chosen to put themselves “in the hole” to serve students. This commitment to student access—to the point where it hurts—is apparent in the College’s Allowance for Doubtful Accounts, which significantly increased from 2003 to 2004, from $390,648 to $425,399 (Independent Auditors Report of Financial Statements, 2003-2004, p. 14). This is a clear demonstration of the commitment to helping students, even when it means digging into the College’s own pockets to help those in need. Everyone at the meeting was concerned about the impact on students, if the ability of the College to loan out this money declined.

While the meeting focused on ways to increase the repayment of the loans, what was valued more was the College’s hindered ability to assist students. Almost three years earlier during one of our very first meetings, SWTJC President Sosa told me the College was “student-
focused and student-centered.” Here was a clear and direct demonstration of that stated philosophy. The most important part for the Administration about repaying the loans was to ensure the money was available to be loaned out again in the future to other needy students. All of the students that I met with while staying at the dormitory knew President Sosa personally, and all of them had a story about him to share. In May of 2005, when President Sosa, Dean Gonzales, Dean Bennett, Dean Barker, and myself went into town in Uvalde to eat at a local restaurant, a waitress working at the restaurant made a point to come over to the table after we were finished eating to hug President Sosa. While he currently serves as President, he has remained true to the student-centered philosophy.

Building Educational Partnerships Across the Region

The evidence is clear that Southwest Texas Junior College has stepped well beyond its main Uvalde Campus to demonstrate a commitment to serving the needs of its entire service region. Increasing access to educational opportunities, a key ideal of the RCCI, was not limited to adult learners, increased access also included serving students who have not yet finished high school, and working with recent area high school graduates. The College has accomplished this goal of increasing access to education by building partnerships with forty-four area high schools and creating the SWTnet to deliver dual enrollment classes. The College has also remained dedicated to joining forces with the Middle Rio Grande Workforce Development Board to participate in a local version of “upward bound,” monitored by the Development Board.

Blaine Bennett, Dean of Technology and Institutional Advancement, has served in this new position created as a result of the RCCI funding from the Ford Foundation since 1996. Dean Bennett helped build the collaborative partnership between the schools in the region and the College, positioning SWTJC as a technology center hub. Through the RCCI grant, SWTJC
constructed distance-learning centers, which did not previously exist in the region, and spurred additional leveraged investments that would have been impossible to finance with the help of the RCCI. The consortium of schools has helped the region get out of its “turfdom” and realize that there is strength in numbers. It has also served to address the "poor education ethic" cited by College officials to Katsinas in 1994. The evolution of the SWTnet of High School Internet connected services between the College and 22 area high schools, and fostered continued development of “two plus two” programs for area high school students. From 1994 to 2004, SWTJC's advanced distance education program has seen a 3000% increase in Internet courses delivered. SWTnet's Video Conferencing classrooms now connect professors between all SWTJC's branch campuses, lowering the economies of scale needed to offer a more comprehensive sophomore level curriculum, especially in mathematics and the sciences. SWTnet now is linked to many of the local area high schools, and the promotion of dual credit enrollment has also resulted in a broader education ethic among the region's young people (Personal interviews, LaRue, 2004.)

According to Dean Bennett, when RCCI program staff asked College officials about the current status of technology on the campus in 1995, they were told that SWTJC needed "a complete technology overhaul." This overhaul included some pressing needs, such as revamping their administrative systems, develop a new data tracking and computer system for students, and to create a region-wide video conferencing capacity. "With the help of RCCI funding, all of these goals were accomplished and more," said Dean Bennett. Three high tech classrooms were constructed at a cost of $70,000 dollars apiece on each of the three campuses. Today, additional classrooms have been added at the campuses and at area K-12 schools as well, the cost of which has declined to about $20,000 dollars each. Most importantly, the College created an internal
capacity to maintain its systems through the technical expertise now employed by SWTJC, which in turn has had additional ancillary benefits.

Dual credit enrollments have grown following establishment through RCCI funding by SWTJC of technology-based classrooms. In 2004, the College could boast dual credit agreements with 44 high schools across its 11 county service delivery area. Dual credit courses have proven very popular for students. College officials believe dual credit courses in local high schools have been key in helping students build self-esteem and relieve fears about being overwhelmed regarding what it takes to do college level work.

A Partnership to Keep Young People in the Educational Pipeline

The Director of the Middle Rio Grande Development Board, Ricky McNeil, described a powerful program the Development Board has run predominately through the SWTJC that also seeks to expand educational opportunities. This program enrolls local high school students into a college course for the summer term immediately after they graduate. Mr. McNeil said, “Every summer we run a college bound program and it is probably our most successful program to date. We sponsor local high school students who are recent May graduates and we help them go to college in the summer. We get them exposed to campus and to college. We use Texas A&M Kingsville, Texas A&M International in Laredo, SWTJC, and also have used St. Edwards in Austin and Texas State University in San Marcos. It has been a huge success for our student to gain this exposure to campus life. After they complete the program they may transfer to anywhere else. While they are in the program we help them with financial aid, we get them some money for school clothes and enrichment activities. It is a real eye-opener for the kids, we have about an 88% success rate for the program.
We now have people who were jumpstarted in this program and have now come back to region. This is one of our approaches to slowing down this regions “brain drain.” I made this statement to Mr. McNeil “these young people are at a fork in the road of life and if we can spend $5,000 dollars now and start them down the right road, we can never spend that amount again later on and get as much in return.” He very much agreed with my statement. He said that the Workforce Board will never do away with that program. At its peak they had over 130 participants and today they are down to about 35 participates because of a decrease in funding for the program.

About 70% of our region’s high school graduates cannot pass all elements of the college entrance exam so we have bought some remediation in the past. By doing this we have saved them money against their PELL allowances. It gives them a spark because we give them some respect by investing in them. That investment means a lot to a young person who may not have much support of any kind coming in from other places (personal interview, McNeil, July, 2004)

Building Educational Partnerships with Universities

When I asked The President of SWTJC’s Board of Trustee, Rodolfo Flores how Sul Ross started its relationship with SWTJC he told me the genesis of their partnership. Mr. Flores said:

In 1973 I petitioned the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to allow Sul Ross to come to SWTJC to offer upper-level classes. The region’s leadership knew they needed to be able to serve the needs of the area’s citizens who did not want to, or were not able to leave the region to obtain an advanced degree. The Coordinating Board agreed and the longstanding relationship between Sul Ross and Southwest Texas Junior College has been a win–win relationship for both
institutions and the regions. If one simply looks at the high number of SWTJC faculty and staff who hold Bachelors and Masters’ degrees from Sul Ross, the impact of this relationship started back in 1973 becomes immediately evident.

As of the early 1990’s, Sul Ross State University, whose main campus was more than three hours by automobile away in Alpine, near Big Bend National Park, operated facilities on buildings owned by SWTJC in Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass. SRSU continued to increase its upper level offerings, both at the bachelor's and master's levels, as more students elect the opportunity to remain in the local area to pursue their baccalaureate and master's degrees. In 1994, Katsinas comments on how this relationship, where the four-year university is the “guest” of the community college, and how it leads toward positive and cooperative relations between the two entities. He noted being impressed by the Sul Ross Dean, Frank Abbott, who oversaw the three Sul Ross campuses co-located at each of the SWTJC campuses. Katsinas commented on how this created a seamless web, Kindergarten through twelfth grade, to the community college and the key senior-level university, for the region. He suggested that a good idea would be to find out which area high school had the highest college attendance rates and then to somehow “heat up” the other area high schools.

A decade later, Southwest Texas Junior College had not only linked itself to the K-12 system in the region, it had also created a seamless educational web that now leads through high school and SWTJC to Sul Ross' Rio Grande College. With the tremendous increase in growth at the Junior College, has come growth with Sul Ross Rio Grande College and this now means that more students can stay in the region and complete both bachelor’s and graduate degrees. Sul Ross and Southwest Texas Junior College have maintained a long-standing agreement in this
area. SWTJC has built several buildings for Sul Ross Rio Grande College to be housed in Uvalde, Del Rio, and at Eagle Pass.

This partnership does not work without its difficulties, though. During my visit of in July of 2004, the subject of articulation agreements between SWTJC, Sul Ross Alpine and Sul Ross Rio Grande College (RGC) appeared to be somewhat touchy. As explained to me, Sul Ross Alpine was accepting SWTJC courses that Sul Ross RGC was not. This was very perplexing as Sul Ross Alpine is nearly five hours away from SWTJC, while Sul Ross RGC is housed on the same campus as SWTJC. When asked why this occurs, no one at SWTJC nor Sul Ross RGC was able to explain the inconsistencies to me, and it appeared to end up in finger pointing from both sides. This was sad, in light of the great potential for an ever-expanding Sul Ross SWTJC connection. Indeed many people working at SWTJC hold advanced degrees from Sul Ross Rio Grande College. Perhaps in future years, articulation issues will be fully resolved; it is worth noting in passing that the conference theme of the first meeting of the American Association of Junior Colleges in 1920 was "Improving Transfer and Articulation," issues that remain vexing at times today.

Dr. Joel Vela, the Vice President for Sul Ross Rio Grande College, was generally perceived as a friend of the College and a man with vision. From my interview, it was clear that Dr. Vela has had a long and distinguished career in education. Born in Mission Texas and moved to Kerrville at an early age, he went to Texas A&M University. As college junior, he joined the Peace Corp and worked in Peru. Upon returning stateside, he completed his bachelor’s degree from the University of Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas, and then served as Director of Title VII for the San Angelo School District. It was during this time that he completed his master’s degree from Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas. He
completed his doctorate at Wyoming State in Laramie, and worked for Penn Valley College in Kansas City under its Title III Program on the noncredit side of that community college campus. In 1976-77 he worked for North Lake College, part of the Dallas County Community College District. In 1984, he became the Vice President for Instruction of North Lake College, where he served until 1993, when he became President of Palo Alto College, part of San Antonio's Alamo Community College District. Vela later went to Mt. Hood Community College in Oregon as President. In 2001 he became the Vice President for Sul Ross Rio Grande College, where he serves as campus CEO, reporting directly to the President of Sul Ross State University in Alpine.

Vice President Vela said that SRRGC had 1,050 combined total enrolled students among the Uvalde, Eagle Pass, and Del Rio campuses. He said that Spring is historically a larger enrollment semester for SRMRGC than Fall, and that it was his intention to add additional bachelors degrees in Nursing and Chemistry. The facilities for both programs had already been constructed, and Sul Ross was waiting for Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approval for both programs during the time of my visits to SWTJC. As Vela noted,

“Education programs have been a funnel for the College. People here see teachers as visible white collar professional jobs so it is who they model after, that is what they say they want to do for a living. White collar professional jobs are important but scarce in this area and we have been predominantly female in education. This is unfortunate because our citizens lack career role models and are limited in their career aspirations, and choices.”

When asked how he assesses new potential degree programs, Vice President Vela said “We must start with all the Baby Boomers retiring, there will be a high need for people with the special skills required to fill those jobs.” He told me there was about a 67-68% direct transfer
into SRRG from SWTJC, and seven to eight percent of the students were indirect transfer into SRRG. We did not speak about the articulation difficulties identified by others with whom I visited.

According to Vice President Vela, Sul Ross Rio Grande College has an $8 million operating budget, and provides a value added to the region that reaches as high as $46-48 million per year of economic impact. When speaking of how this region of Texas was left out of current political thinking, he said, “The State of Texas has seen the ‘border’ as running from Brownsville to Laredo and they have historically skipped this region and gone onto El Paso.” It is clear that this has been a problem for this area as a “forgotten” area of the state. In the case of Sul Ross, SRMRG has roughly 21,000 miles of service area with an estimated 300,000 people concentrated in less than 5% percent of the available land, according to Vice President Vela.

Vice President Vela felt that expanding both the faculty and the library services were key components of expanding the graduate programs offered. He felt Sul Ross Rio Grande College keeps the local interest in mind, and that SRRGC's involvement with the local Council of Governments adds value to the local community, as well as SRRGC staff involvement in civic organizations. He said,

“We do things for a cause not just because. Chris when you having nothing to lose you can’t lose anything. When I worked in Dallas I saw the wealthiest districts in the State of Texas. Here in spite of little luxury, the students cherish what they do have, and they are grateful for the opportunity and seek to make the most of what is available to them.”

Vice President Vela said the College was based on the principle of the 4 A’s:

1. Accessible –access in three counties, Uvalde, Del Rio, Eagle Pass
2. Adaptable- expanding to meet needs as they arise and are presented to College

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3. Affordable – lowest cost of a 4 year College in Texas

4. Accountable – our number of student success are very good

Case in point for item number #2 meant expanding the Biology offerings by adding programs for nurses and for chemistry to and them adding Masters Programs for both disciplines.

Vice President Vela said, “People don’t want a handout; they take pride in themselves and in their own growth and self sufficiency. We want access and an infusion in this local economy. This section of the Texas Mexican Border cannot be forgotten. Here in the Middle Rio Grande region we have natural resources and labor, we must invest in our human resources for growth and expansion.”

SWTJC Student Voices

Every student attending Southwest Texas Junior College has their own “story” about their life. Questions about who they are, how they got to SWTJC, and where they want to go from here have answers as varied as the students telling the tales. In this section four different students’ stories will be told in order to give a glimpse into what some SWTJC’s students have dealt with, where they are coming from, what they have already overcome to be enrolled at the College, and dreams they plan to turn into realities. The first student is a non-traditional, Anglo, single-mom, enrolled at the Del Rio campus. The remaining three students, two Hispanic females and one Hispanic male, are traditional-aged students enrolled at the Uvalde campus. Here are some of their stories.

Tabitha was a twenty-five year old, Anglo female student enrolled at the Del Rio Campus of the College. She grew up the small town of Macon, Missouri. While enrolled in high school she chose early entry into the US Army Reserve in 1996. She then graduated from high school in 1997 and went to Army Medic School, a program similar to Emergency Medical Training. I
asked her what interested her in the Army and she replied “because there where no other good options in Missouri.”

Tabitha attended Medic School in San Antonio at Fort Sam Houston. After four months of training as an Army Medic, she completed a 17-week physical therapy training program, also at Fort Sam Houston. She went back to Missouri and worked for the United States Military Pentathlon Team as a Medic and Physical Therapist. The following year, 2000, she served on the team as an administrative support person. In 2001 she continued to serve on the Pentathlon team, and on active duty in San Antonio. She became pregnant by an Air Force soldier and moved back to Macon, Missouri after the September 2001 bombings. Her son was born in November of 2001. She left her family in Missouri in July of 2002 and moved to Del Rio to closer to be closer to the father of her son, who was stationed at Laughlin Air Force Base, in Del Rio.

Tabitha worked in retail sales at Bealls, a clothing store, and as a waitress in 2002 and 2003. She began attending SWTJC in Del Rio in Spring of 2004. She could not make enough money to support her son, and she received no support from the father. She wanted a better life than what she was experiencing when she saw a sign for the College on Veterans Boulevard. Veteran Boulevard is the main street in Del Rio. She came to the campus and filled out her Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) financial aid form. I asked her about the GI Bill and she said since she did not make use of it while she was on active duty in the reserves it was not available to her now.

When I asked her about her finances currently, she said she was receiving the maximum Pell Grant each semester, of $2,025 in the Spring and Fall. In the summer she receives the Pan American Round Table Grant from the College, which is an award of $250. She is eligible for
that award each semester, as long as she maintains the required grade point average. In Spring of 2004 she took 13 hours, in Summer I she took six hours, and in Summer II also took six hours. In Fall of 2004, she planned on taking another 15 hours, and 12-15 hours in the spring semester of 2005.

Tabitha said she wanted to start the Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) program, but could not enroll in the Anatomy and Physiology course she needed, so she will have to hold out another year and continue to take core classes. She said she was not the only one unable to get into the Licensed Vocation Nurse program. Earlier that day, the Associate Dean of Instruction for Del Rio, Don Tomas, had shown me the nursing classrooms and we talked about the numbers of students in the program. Dean Tomas told me the eligible student slots in the nursing training programs are closely watched by the state of Texas coordinating and licensing boards. I asked why the College did not open more slots for students if more students wanted into the programs. He said since the washout rates were so high for the programs that they do not want to have large classes. With smaller classes they can have very high entrance standards and hopefully have higher completion rates.

I asked Tabitha what she found to be positive about SWTJC’s Del Rio branch. Her list included: reasonable tuition and fees, a relatively low cost of living in Del Rio, and the counselors, staff, and instructors being very approachable. I asked her to list what she did not like about SWTJC’s Del Rio Branch. She lamented the limited number of sections of required courses and labs, she commented on “Feeling like I’m missing something from a lack of student life at the college.” She also said she found it hard to balance time constraints of short summer terms while learning all the required course material.
Tabitha told me her goal was to complete the LVN program and then transfer into the Registered Nurse (RN) program and to ultimately earn her bachelor’s degree. Sul Ross Rio Grande College is now offering more courses in Del Rio, she said, and this means she could stay near her home to complete both goals. I heard from both the Del Rio Bank and Trust President and from Dean Tomas that since both SWTJC and Sul Ross are offering more classes in Del Rio, larger numbers students are staying and taking additional courses. Tabitha also commented that she saw many young people taking advantage of the dual credit courses offered in the local high schools.

It was obvious from our meeting that Tabitha had overcome great odds to be enrolled at the College. From traveling across the United States, to working odd jobs in Del Rio to support herself and her son, she now saw SWTJC’s Del Rio Campus as her ticket to a better life. Even with her extensive military background and training, it was happenstance that got her through the College’s doors and enrolled. We can only guess what her situation would be had she not stumbled across a sign for the College nailed to a post on a busy Veteran’s Boulevard in Del Rio. Tabitha is the quintessential single-mom community college student, receiving financial aid that is never enough to cover the bills, figuring out childcare, and cramming studying in-between baths and playtime. Yet she knows in her heart that the degree she is working so hard for is somewhat like a second child-- demanding, exhausting, satisfying, and in the end, worth all the sacrifices.

Three students were interviewed in July of 2004 at the Minda Kone Lounge in the Matthews Student Center at the Uvalde Campus of SWTJC. Elissa was born in McAllen, in south Texas, and moved to Uvalde when she was about seven. She attended kindergarten in Pearsall, a very small town outside of Uvalde, and then went to Uvalde for first through twelfth
grade. She graduated from Uvalde High School in May of 2003. Elissa wanted to transfer to Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas A&M International in Laredo, or to Texas A&M in Kingsville. Elissa told me she had a twin, so money was very tight with both of them attending college. Elissa’s twin was enrolled at Texas State University—San Marcos, and this meant there was less money for Elissa to attend SWTJC. This did not deter her from enrolling in college, but it did mean that Elissa lived at home and came to SWTJC. She felt that it was important for her to come to SWTJC, even though it was a smaller college, to get sense of what college was like. She was very pleasant and polite. She told us her mom had worked the fields as a girl and she wanted a better life for her children. Her parents were very supportive of Elissa attending college.

Jeff reported being born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. He grew up on the southeast side of the city and attended Burbank High School. He was recruited to play basketball at San Antonio College and he lived on campus. He stayed at San Antonio College for just one year, and left in poor academic standing. The basketball coach at SWTJC spoke to him about coming to Uvalde and improving his academics. Jeff said he did not know about Southwest Texas Junior College until the SWTJC coach recruited him. He began at SWTJC in Fall of 2002, and when interviewed, was set to graduate with an Associates in Arts in Criminal Justice in the Fall of 2004. He said he had received a scholarship to play basketball at Mary Hardin Baylor in Belton, Texas. Jeff said he wants to finish at Mary Hardin Baylor and attend law school.

Jessica told me she was born and raised in Carrizo Springs, about 45 miles south of Uvalde. She is the middle of five children. Her father owns his own business as a mechanic, and provides roadside assistance to motorists. Jessica said while her father was often gone with work, she was very close to her mother and sisters. Both of Jessica’s older sisters attend Texas
State- San Marcos, about two and a half hours away, and she planned on enrolling at Texas State- San Marcos after she finishes her Associate of Arts degree in Elementary Education in December of 2004.

These three students had as much in common with Tabitha as they did not. All four reported costs and proximity of the College to their home as key reasons for their enrollment. All said they were receiving some form of financial aid and without that assistance, none would be able to maintain enrollment. All four students reported a high sense of satisfaction with the College and its staff, yet all complained about core courses filling up quickly, and not being able to enroll in their required classes. All four students reported high levels of self-satisfaction for being enrolled at SWTJC and all four felt they would “definitely” graduate with their associates degrees and go on to complete bachelor’s degrees.

There were also many differences among them, however. While Tabitha struggled to find adequate, reliable, and affordable child care in Del Rio, Elissa, Jeff, and Jessica all had difficulties in navigating the higher education landscape and lamented about a lack of parent’s knowledge to assist them when issues arose. Tabitha was the only student with the extra responsibility of raising a child, and Jeff was the only one with the added pressure of balancing academics while maintaining an athletic scholarship for basketball. Jessica’s parents had five children to support and educate, and Elissa had a twin; both of their families are faced with the difficult and arduous task of continuing to come up with financial support in the face of skyrocketing educational costs.

While nothing was easy for these four students, they all showed a commitment to achieving their education and the obstacles in their paths did not appear to be hindering their march toward completing their degrees. All of these students felt like they had become part of
Southwest Texas Junior College, and more importantly the College cared about them and their success. The SWTJC administration can say that they are “student centered and focuses” until they are blue in the face, but until the students echo this sentiment, it is just another statement. The four students interviewed and the countless others I came in contact with made me believe the College was telling the truth and living up to its “student centered and focus” mantra. The College works hard to demonstrate and prove to their students’ everyday that they matter at SWTJC, and their students appear to hear them and are thankful.

Residence Halls: A Key Component of Student Life at a Rural Community College

This rise in student enrollments in Del Rio and Eagle Pass has had a negative impact on the dormitory numbers in Uvalde. The full-time students in the dormitories have been an essential part of student life at SWTJC over the years. Like many rural community colleges with residence halls, SWTJC’s on-campus students provide most of the leadership in campus activities and campus life, a phenomenon documented in a 2005 study by Moeck. The current dormitories at SWTJC are showing their age at 30 years, and the College, in order to keep campus life at its main campus in Uvalde vibrant, is making substantial financial investments to improve and upgrade its residence halls. There are three dormitories, Eddie Garner, which is all female, and Hubbard Hall, which has both a male and female wing.

Even though the all-female dormitory is never full, Dean Barker believes the culture of southwest Texas will always require the College to provide all-female dormitories, because, he noted, the Hispanic families only want their daughters in all-female dormitories. Dean Barker continues developing new ways to get students into the dormitories. He is presently developing a program to recruit female students from Monterrey, Mexico for summer camps at SWTJC. He believes this would help generate funds to cover any residence hall vacancies when they are not
at capacity. Hubbard Hall, where I stayed during my visits, was built in the early 1970’s, and is
now in the final stage of a three-stage remodeling plan. Phase One rid the dormitories of high
humidity and mold by replacing an antiquated chiller system and installing exhaust fans. The
hard water build-up required a change in the plumbing pipes. Phase Two saw the instillation of
new “hotel style” energy efficient air conditioning units that can be operated by a master control
switch, to allow the College to control specific units instead of heating and cooling whole wings
of the building. Phase Three included a substantial remodeling of the rooms themselves, and the
bathrooms, including instillation of fiberglass shower stalls to replace old tiled stalls. The age
and wear on the existing residence halls was too much for the understaffed maintenance
department at the College, Dean Barker reported.

The presence of full-time students on campus requires additional resources that urban and
suburban community colleges do not require. For example, the campus police, another area that
reports to Dean Barker, are an active presence for safety on the campus. Their goal is not to go
out and look for students, but rather to be seen around campus, said Dean Barker, getting out of
their cars and walking around. In 2003, the Campus had two reports of sexual assault, though no
charges were officially pressed by the female students. In both incidents, the students reported
not being sure of what happened, and did not know if penetration took place. The Dean noted
that his office worked closely with campus health services regarding sex education and that
condoms were available at the health center. He also reported that while he did address the issue
of sexual assault at orientation, it is and will continue to be a touchy subject in this high
Hispanic, high Baptist, and high Catholic populated area. The College enrolls a majority of
students from small towns who may not really understand the danger of strangers and drinking.
He said he never sees sexual assault cases where alcohol was not involved.
Operationalizing a Student-Centered Philosophy

“We are delighted that you have chosen to attend Southwest Texas Junior College. We are proud of reputation as a student-centered education institution where the student and his/her needs receive the highest priority. All of us at the College are eager to help you succeed in achieving the personal goals that have brought you to our campus,” opening statement in the Southwest Texas Junior College Student Handbook (2004). This statement lays out the underlying SWTJC philosophy toward student life and campus climate. It is no wonder, given the fact that the current CEO rose up through the ranks of student activities and services prior to being named President, that so much attention is placed upon student life at SWTJC. President Ismael Sosa understands the importance of an active student life component on his campuses and, has demonstrated his personal commitment to a vibrant and active campus community through more than thirty years of service in student affairs. The current Dean of Students, Joe Barker, has more than twenty years of student affairs experience. It is clear to the author from his visits over the past three years that both are sincerely kind and caring men, incredibly concerned and committed to the students they serve.

Southwest Texas Junior College boasts over forty active student clubs ranging from Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society charted on the campus in 1949 and the Rodeo Club founded in 1950, to the much more recent Chaos Math Club and Computer Science and Internet Club. The campus has a very popular SWTJC Student Activities Board that hosts numerous events, speakers, and trips as well as a highly competitive intramural sports program where bragging rights mean more than trophies. Couple all of this with two hundred plus students living in on-campus housing, and SWTJC has one of the most active student life environments found at any community college.
The College understands students sometimes need help both inside and outside of the classroom and the College has numerous Student Support Services providing a variety of services including counseling, academic instruction, peer tutoring, supplemental instruction, specially designed workshops and basic skill instruction in writing and math. The College’s main campus in Uvalde also has a Student Health Center, Testing Center, and a Career Services Center. All of these entities report to the Dean of Students and all maintain the same commitment to creating a student-centered environment.

The branch campuses of Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Crystal City all have varying levels of Student Life and Student Support Services, but all of them maintain the student centered institutional philosophy. As each of these branch campuses has grown, so too have the student support services, student activities, and campus life. Currently Del Rio and Eagle Pass employ fulltime Student Activities Specialists, and each campus have seen an increase in its number of student organizations and their participants. The increases in student life and student activities would not have occurred without the commitment to the ideal of operationalizing a student-centered philosophy. This ideal has it genesis at the top of the College, starting with President Sosa, and continuing to the Dean of Student Services, Joe Barker, who began his interview by saying, “Chris, here we pride ourselves on being real student friendly.”

Dean Barker had 21 combined years of service in higher education. His experience includes work in student activities, counseling, housing, and financial aid. As an administrator and student affairs professional at SWTJC, he has personal involvement in nearly every area of student affairs. Currently, 14 reporting units are directly under his umbrella. The many hats he was expected to wear was evidenced by the length of explanation needed just to tell me his span of authority at the College. He seamed a bit exasperated as he discussed all the areas for which
he was responsible. When asked how long he could keep all the balls going at once, and how long the College planned to keep the current system of maintaining just three Deans, (it had been one year since SWTJC folded Dean Kramer’s position into the other Deanships, reducing the number from four to three Deans) he said,

I’m worried about not being able to attend to everything, and more importantly, worried about my staff. I’m afraid of burning them out, especially the Registrar and Testing Center Director. They are dedicated and competent staff, and care a lot about the students. This scares me to death; they give and give and give, and I’m afraid at some point they are going to give too much.

Dean Barker saw changes in technology as a key issue facing his division and the College in the current and near future,

In 1998 we had more change in technology in one year than in the past five, and it was hard on our staff. When you’ve being doing your job the same way for 20 years, it’s a lot to ask of them for that kind of adjustment. We have to help them change with us so they aren’t left behind and frustrated. We have constant new needs presented, we have to work with our human resources to be able to keep up with changes and new demands in admissions, counseling, and workforce training. Our human resources are our key to success.

The intertwining of the College, its employees, and the community it serves was evidenced on a personal level during my interview with Dean Barker. He spoke of his wife’s recent battle with breast cancer in 2003. It was very serious at one point, he said; thankfully, she has recovered from chemotherapy and is doing much better. His wife is also a longtime employee of the College, and she works in the office with her husband. Their son Cody was
planning to get married later that summer. Dean Barker's wife is Hispanic, and like many of the College's Anglo employees, Dean Barker is fluent in Spanish. This has proven to be very important, to help him work effectively with Hispanic students, parents, and families he sees the majority of the time. He said,

I’m an in the trenches kind of guy so last year was real tough on me. It was hard to keep all my obligations to the College, my staff and especially important to me to be there for my wife. I have had to shift my style to be a better manager of my directors, because I can’t be as hands-on as I’ve been in the past.

Dean Barker felt the College as an entity has shifted in its mindset from bringing people to the College, to bringing the College to them. On this note, he saw the change from night to day classes as key to growth in Del Rio and Eagle Pass. SWTJC has more traditional students enrolled at both of those campuses than ever before.
CHAPTER 5

EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ON THE BORDER

Introduction

As Katsinas noted in his original site visit in 1994, neither the internal leadership at SWTJC, nor the external leadership in the communities it served saw the College as an important player in regional economic development. Even after the establishment of branch campuses in Del Rio, Eagle Pass and Crystal City, that date back to the mid-seventies, the College appeared to be more focused on the transfer function at its main campus in Uvalde than being a regionally based community college with a modern, comprehensive curriculum that included non-credit workforce training. In describing SWTJC’s involvement with Workforce Training/Continuing Education and Regional Economic Development, from his own admission, President Word in 1994 noted that the College was not an active participant in regional economic development. As Katsinas noted, in terms of the three missions of the college general education/transfer, vocation/terminal, and workforce training/continuing education, the College has historically done well with the first two, but has not been much involved in the third (Katsinas, 1995, p.3).

As SWTJC's involvement with RCCI was about to begin, then-President Billy Word prophetically stated “the College is now uniquely situated to endure a quantum leap in its abilities to provide services to the region.” President Word’s 1994 prediction has come true over the past decade of SWTJC’s involvement in RCCI, as SWTJC has moved beyond its prior role as a “little College in Uvalde, for Uvalde” toward fulfilling its mission to serve as the regional hub
for higher education access, workforce training, and economic development in the Middle Rio Grande Region of Texas.

This chapter explores the development and evolution of SWTJC’s more expansive role related to serving the educational needs of adult learners, increasing the skills of the local workforce, and in turn increasing regional economic development. The chapter is organized as follows: The Challenge of Economic Opportunity on the Border: SWTJC’s Uphill Battle, Expanding Services to Adult Learners, Expanding Workforce Training to Create Opportunity, and Changing the Mindset to Promote Regional Economic Development.

The Challenge of Economic Opportunity on the Border: SWTJC's Uphill Battle

According to the Director of the Middle Rio Grande Workforce Development Board, Ricky McNeil, southwest Texas' economic engines are still driven by agriculture, natural resource production in oil and gas, ranching, and an emerging hunting and tourism industry. The beef market has been especially strong for local ranchers, and mad cow disease concerns have had no impact on total sales. The single most important issue in the region is water; those with irrigation do well in farming and ranching, and those without are not be able to compete. San Antonio is the largest metropolitan area in the United States with no surface water; today that city purchases water rights from area farmers. Farmers in the region are making more money selling water rights and taking land out of production than from growing crops, McNeil said. Even though San Antonio pays large sums of money to farmers for their water, the decline of agricultural production results in cuts in all the ancillary jobs that go with farming; such as fertilizer and seed sales, tractors, labor, trucks, etc. "This region cannot survive just by selling their water to San Antonio," McNeil said, adding.

Both this region and San Antonio share the Edwards Aquifer, so southwest Texas
farmers are not an answer to San Antonio’s water woes. This region must disclose our water issues to any new business coming into the area, and that has not been good for development (personal interview, McNeil, July, 2004).

The largest “up and coming” enterprise in southwest Texas has been hunting, McNeil said. Hunting is now one of the region’s largest industries, and it continues to grow. From September, with the beginning of dove season, until the end of deer season in January, area motels and hotels are booked, and rooms are hard to come by. Hunters flying into the airport in Uvalde keep the runways busy, and all of this activity pumps millions of dollars into the local economy (personal interview, McNeil, July, 2004).

Employment data confirm that there is more to the region's economic development than agriculture and natural resource-based industries. According to 2000 US Census data, employment in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining in SWTJC’s 11 county state-assigned service area accounts for an average of just 12% of the total population’s employment. By county, the range is from a high of 28% in rural Edwards County (population 2,031) to just three percent in Val Verde County, the home of Del Rio's Laughlin Air Force Base, (population 46,569), and four percent in Maverick County, whose county seat is Eagle Pass (population, 50,178).

The highest percentage of the region’s population in 2000 was employed in education, health and social services with an average of 22% across the 11 counties. The highest percentage of the total population employed in this category was 31% in Zavala County (population 11,593), with the lowest percentage employed in this category being 20%, shared by Medina (population 41,553) and Edwards County (population 2,031). Retail trade came in a distant third, accounting for 12% of employment for the citizens in the region.
Unemployment and underemployment have long been an issue in this region (Miller & Rowley, 2000). In 1994, the largest towns in SWTJC’s state-assigned service delivery area were Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Uvalde, and Crystal City. They had an average unemployment rate of 16% with Eagle Pass having the highest rate at 22.4%. In 2000, those same cities had an average unemployment rate of 13%, with Crystal City at 17% and Eagle Pass still the highest at 18%. The 1990 unemployment average for the nine counties in SWTJC's service area was 12.6%. In 2000, the unemployment average for the nine counties, plus the two added by the 1996-97 Texas Community College Enabling Law, which created the current eleven counties in SWTJC’s service area, was down to 10%. While this percentage was still more than twice the 2000 statewide average of four percent, it does show the region has made some progress in reducing chronic and persistent unemployment (US Census, 2000).

The region's unemployment must be placed in comparison to two key characteristics of the region; the increasing number of Hispanics including substantial new immigrants who are not native speakers of English added to the region's population, and the slow but steady increase in the region's adult educational attainment. In 1990, Hispanics represented 67% of the total population in the College’s three-county taxing district, and 72% of the total population in the eight counties that would later make up the eleven-county service delivery district. In 2000, Hispanics represented 72% of the total population in the area's three-county taxing district, and 75% of the population in the eight remaining counties.

The area continues to suffer from frighteningly high levels of high school drop out. Maverick County (Eagle Pass) and Zavala (Crystal City) posted 40% and 39%, respectively, of their adults ages 25 years and over as completing less than the ninth grade. This speaks directly to the crying need of the region’s citizens for increased education, and a "stronger education
"Ethic," as College leaders indicated in 1994 (Katsinas, 1994 & 1995). Still, the region has made some headway in educational success: From 1990 to 2000, the percentage of the population ages 25 and over possessing a baccalaureate degree for the 11 counties doubled from five percent to ten percent. Edwards and Kinney Counties posted a more than doubling rate, from six percent to 13%, while Maverick County rose from two percent in 1990 to six percent in 2000. Val Verde County saw an increase from five percent to nine percent in 2000. Medina reported the highest increase, from four percent in 1990 to 17% in 2000. The increases in adult educational attainment occurred in counties that saw increases in the percentage of Hispanics and decreases in the percentage of Anglos over the ten-year period.

According to Mr. Ricky McNeil, Executive Director of the Middle Rio Grande Workforce Development Board,

This area has been stagnant with limited job growth and even less job growth with benefits. The low-wage base coupled with a lack of benefits means a real struggle for the people in the area. If they can find a job making nine dollars an hour with benefits then they at least have a chance, without the benefits part of the deal, it makes it real tough on our people out here. The biggest obstacle we face in rural Texas is the small number of potential employers in an area with tremendous numbers of people applying for jobs. Here we have a substantial number of people that are underemployed. Eight dollars an hour with no benefits is roughly $16,000 a year. That is living in poverty. People here want and need that nine dollar an hour job with benefits to have chance at a decent living.

Today, unlike a decade ago, the largest single provider for training in the region via federal employment and training funded programs is SWTJC. The College—its main campus
and each of its branches—provide training for participants across all training areas. According to Mr. McNeil,

Every local employer or jobseeker has access to services; they have a large resource rooms with computers so they can scan for jobs in the area with local job postings too. People can get help writing resumes, and can get call centers assistance with unemployment insurance. People are classified as “older youth” until the age of twenty-one. If they meet the qualifications for WIA [Workforce Investment Act] support, they are run through a battery of tests, and they are counseled about picking a job.

With the ever increasing demand for services, and with decreasing federal and state funds, all workforce centers want to get most “bang for the buck.” Our workforce board never wants to train people for jobs they really do not want. Once we got into a situation where students were being sent off to Dallas to receive training, and before the training was even completed, many of the students had come back to Uvalde. Everyone lost in that scenario, the students, the boards, and the employers. We don’t want to send people out of area to jobs anymore because traditionally, they want to return home. The change in culture, and the absence of family is too much. They make that decision to come back, regardless of the consequences in employment.

This phenomenon speaks directly to Katsinas’ claim that the majority of citizens from these rural areas stay regardless of the economic situation. It is their connection to place, to their region, their families, and the climate and culture that dictate their behavior, not economic opportunity.

Mr. McNeil noted that even with a 20% unemployment rate in much of the region, high
school graduates, junior college graduates and university graduates all find themselves competing for jobs—and this means high competition for even low-paying jobs. He continued,

If you have a job that is advertising $30,000 a year with benefits, you will have a stack of applications sky high. Traditionally we have done very well with standards given to us by state and feds. That is because we have a unique and working relationship with all of our employers in the region. We make every job count; we don’t miss any jobs, because we can’t afford to miss any jobs out here.

It is clear that building a stronger education ethic to in turn develop from the ground up a stronger, more capably trained and employable workforce will remain a challenge in this region for many years to come. While efforts to encourage students to stay in school, such as the home-grown version of Upward Bound described in Chapter 5, above, will clearly need expansion to grow the pipeline, efforts to serve and reconnect adults to the labor market will be important as well, to which attention is now turned.

Expanding Services to Adult Learners

George Garza is the Director of Adult Basic Education (ABE) at Southwest Texas Junior College. As Director, he oversees about 1,800 students each year, who are served annually by 85 full- and part-time faculty, with an annual budget in 2004 of approximately $1.5 million. Money for ABE at SWTJC is received through numerous federal, state, and local grants. The Texas Learns grant provided as a subset of the Texas Education Agency and the Equipped for the Future program are grants they are currently using.

The Adult Basic Education program uses TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and ESL (English as a Second Language) grants for displaced students, to train people for jobs in the retail trades. Mr. Garza sees this as a first step toward more permanent
employment for those in need of assistance. He notes that for many, they need to first learn how to have and hold a job before they are able to upgrade their job skills.

As Mayor of Uvalde, Mr. Garza has named representatives of several of the large retailing firms in the area to the Workforce Investment Board as advisors, to help these students in their training programs. New programs have also been developed, such as the Certified Nurses Aide program, where students who have earned their GEDs (General Education Development) can work in an area nursing home or hospital. This is a first step for those students who wish to enroll in the Vocational Nursing tract, but do not yet have the skills to complete that degree. This is a direct reflection of how extending the services from the non-credit side of the College (developmental education certificates) can over time funnel students into the credit side of the College (vocational education), and deliver on the promise of social mobility.

College officials report a large increase in the number of GED’s granted from the College to previously un-served area populations, and believe this demonstrates the Colleges’ new commitment to activities beyond serving traditional aged students interested only in transfer courses and curricula. With this new “open door to access” approach, the College has been able to move students through its expanded GED programs, into developmental education when necessary, and then into transfer and technical programs, thus reaching one of the Ford Foundations’ cornerstone goals of increasing access to improve the lives of the previously un-served local citizens. The great growth in total enrollment at the College from 1994 to 2004 includes substantial increases in students succeeding in GED programs and developmental education. This growth has occurred at all SWTJC campuses, but especially in Eagle Pass and Del Rio (Personal interviews, LaRue, 2004).
Expanding Workforce Training to Create Opportunity

In 2002, the College began maintaining records on people who enroll and complete SWTJC's expanding workforce training courses and programs. Prior to this time, those entering workforce training programs had been viewed by College records as “completed” in terms of their relationship with SWTJC as soon as the short-term training was finished. The great expansion in enrollments of all types—for credit transfer and technical/vocational, as well as non-credit workforce training, has coincided with the development of new curricula at the College. College officials deliberately created new curricula of seamless nature designed to move students from “noncredit” workforce training programs forward into the “for-credit” side of the College. For example, the College has workforce training for people interested in law enforcement that can now lead them into the law enforcement academy and from there into the Associate of Applied Science degree in Criminal Justice. Upon completion of the AAS degree in Criminal Justice, they are much more likely to land well-paying positions with the US Border Patrol and other area law enforcement agencies. The non-credit workforce training offered in Early Childhood Development can be segued into a Child Development Certificate, and from there into the Associate of Applied Science degree in Child Development. The College saw the need to keep more accurate records on those being served by its growing workforce training function, which includes continuing education as well as customized training for business and industry, as these programs' growing enrollments have "bled" into other parts of the College, a point made by Dean Kramer in 2002 to the author. "Today, regional economic development and adaptive workforce training have become part of SWTJC’s daily culture. This has allowed the College to provide more services that the area needs and to increase its presence inside the region," he said. As Dean of Instruction Hector Gonzales later said, "This is a new phenomenon
for the College, and one that helps to show the important connection between both the noncredit and credit sides of the College’s function (Personal interview, Gonzales, July 2005).

In 2002, Leslie Kramer, who at the time served as Dean of Business/ Fiscal Areas and Workforce Training and Development, reflected on his role at the College said, “I have a very diverse job; I try to look for voids in service areas, and then I fill them with training.” Through SWTJC’s partnership with the Ford Foundation through RCCI, the College has made tremendous strides in its workforce development training capacity, Dean Kramer said. Prior to RCCI involvement in 1994, SWTJC generated approximately 20,000 non-credit contact hours in workforce training. Through the expanded mission focus and additional capacity brought on through its participation in RCCI, SWTJC has increased the number of contact hours generated in 2003-04 to 97,851, an five-fold increase. The College had a high of 133,285 contact hours in 2001-02, and 120,005 in 2002-03. Since the College serves the region’s business community on an as-needed basis, these numbers can be expected to fluctuate from year to year, however the overall trend is unmistakably positive. The College's new training has brought added value to the area, and allowed training funds from employers to stay in the region, close to home, to reinforce the existing economy (LaRue, 2004, p. 30).

Some of the workforce training that SWTJC has provided includes: business skills training (1,319 contact hours in 2000-01, to 10,256 in 2003-04, 678% increase in three years), certified child care assistants (6,719 contact hours in 2000-01, to 4,559 in 2003-04, 32% decrease in three years), computer science (4,650 contact hours in 2000-01, to 5,246 in 2003-04, 32% decrease), construction and trade (5,736 contact hours in 2000-01, to 9,021 in 2002-03, 57% increase in 2002-03), criminal justice/law enforcement/public safety (33,094 contact hours in 2000-01 to 51,101 in 2003-04, 55% increase), health and human services (3,423 contact hours in
2000-01, to 10,350 in 2003-04, 202% increase), truck driving (30,592 contact hours in 2000-01, to 15,040, 51% decrease), Miscellaneous (346 contact hours in 2000-01, to 1,299 in 2003-04, 275% increase) (Burchfield, 2001, LaRue, 2004). Since 1994, the College has trained casino dealers through its hospitality management program, and developed Internet training through its Center for Financial Training which uses a curriculum prescribed by the American Institute of Banking. All of these needs arising from the local community had previously been unfilled, except by interests and entities outside of the region. With direct funding from RCCI, SWTJC hired its first Director of Workforce Training and Development, Romelia Aranda, who is based out of the College's Eagle Pass Regional Tech Center. Today, Ms. Aranda directs an office of 17 full-time staff.

Ms. Aranda was quick to point out that for her; no day is ever the same. She uses her background in business to build relationships between local business and the College, and seeks out new ways for the College to serve local businesses. From her new RCCI-funded position, she has been able to witness first-hand the growth of the Eagle Pass area and SWTJC's campus there. The five-fold growth from approximately 20,000 credits to 97,000 credits has necessitated the addition of 17 full-time staff members to her Center. Mrs. Aranda’s husband is the county judge of Eagle Pass, and has served in the past as the mayor. Her husband's political prominence in the local area has been both good and bad, but in the end, Mrs. Aranda said, “I can see the difference my work has made in the local area, and that makes me feel good.”

According to officials both within and outside the College, SWTJC now plays a primary role in the delivery of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funded training in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. According to Blaine Bennett, Dean of Institutional Advancement and Technology,
WIA allowed community colleges like SWTJC to become the primary place to locate job training, and this function has put a considerable amount of money back into community college budgets. The WIA has gotten community colleges into community building, and it has let the locals in the area learn what SWTJC can do for them and their businesses. The difficult part, will be maintaining the high profile the College has gained through their work with the [Ford] Foundation (personal interview, 2002).

Community leaders external to the College also noted the College's new, expanded leadership role in workforce training. Dr. Jose Peña of the Texas A&M Extension Service was an extremely pleasant older gentleman, with tan skin and deep lines in face. His hands were hard and calloused, and his dark eyes were quick and shined when he smiled. He has lived in the Uvalde area for a long, long time, and is known by practically everyone in the city and surrounding counties. Dr. Peña—it is not surprising that locals refer to persons who have earned their doctorates as "doctor," given the fact that more than half the adult population has not finished high school--is one of but a handful of Hispanic men with an earned doctorate across the entire region. The high place he holds in the local hierarchy is easy to see. When asked about the changes he has seen over the years from his vantage point with Texas A&M Extension, Dr. Peña commented on the increase in the levels of instruction, and in the skills required of the students. He said, "Before, you could get anybody with a little training and start them off, now our workers are expected to come in with a high skill base, and the College has raised its levels to meet that challenge."

Since my personal experience with Workforce Investment Act Boards was limited, and since it was clear from my prior interviews that the partnership that had been developed between
SWTJC and the Middle Rio Grande Workforce Board was of critical importance to both entities, I scheduled an extended interview that lasted a full three hours with its Executive Director, Mr. Ricky McNeil. Upon entering Mr. McNeil’s office in Uvalde, I admired the numerous deer antlers that adorned his wall, and the brick fireplace in the corner. Our conversation began with small talk about the development board in Orange, Texas, my hometown. I began by asking Mr. McNeil to explain the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) process. He said that the welfare to work system was revamped in Texas in 1993 by Senate Bill 642, which created 28 workforce development boards across all areas of the state. In 1995, House Bill 1863 created the Texas Workforce Commission. Texas was an early implementer state as the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 was phased out, and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was phased in. He explained that the Middle Rio Grande Workforce Board he directs has 15,000 square miles of service area, the 2nd largest in Texas, yet has the smallest total population.

Our Board has an office presence in every county we serve. We have nine centers total, each open to the public. Since we are the people who develop and oversee grants, we cannot also deliver services, as it would be a conflict of interest, so we contract out our services to serve the public. The Workforce Board has piggy backed off the Colleges’ Internet services of the SWTnet’s T1 connections, and can at the least provide a 56K modem line for Internet access at all areas of our service area.

The Workforce Board is responsible for planning, administering, oversight, monitoring, and evaluation. People coming to the Board for services go through a four step process: intake and assessment, eligibility, referral of potential participants, and training and work opportunities.

Mr. McNeil led me through a hypothetical WIA client/SWTJC student case so I could
get a sense of how the Board works, and how its programs interact with those of the College:

Let’s say you are a 19-year-old Hispanic male with a GED. You think you may want to be a truck driver. You would go through the WIA intake process and if you qualified, then the Board would pay for you to get training from the College, pay for your living expenses while you are getting trained, and help you get your Pell Grant and any student loans you might need, while guiding you through the training process. If you were a 19-year-old with a GED, married with small child, and you and your wife wanted training, and were in need of daycare and transportation, we could sponsor both of you for supportive services. Through WIA, working with the College, we try to remove these barriers to training and employment by providing all kinds of support services. That is what we do.

The Middle Rio Grande Workforce Development Board works with potential employers in the area to help them identify skill set “standards” require of potential job applicants. Employers are also encouraged to contact our Board when jobs are coming open, Mr. McNeil said. When contacted, the Board can be instrumental in the prescreening of applicants and referrals of potential hires for companies, he said, adding, the Board also helps the local agricultural producers with ample and adequate workforce when they are needed. In the case of truck driving, the truck driving operating firm sponsors a person to be trained, he said. The Workforce Board then sponsors local training with an ultimate goal of placing that person into unsubsidized employment.

Mr. McNeil discussed new initiatives in the economic development arena in the region. He said a Super Wal-Mart being constructed in Uvalde that represents "an exciting new opportunity," adding
Our people are already in contact with Wal-Mart and will do all the prescreening for employees they need. While there will only be a few full-time jobs from that store, some jobs are better than no jobs. Part of this process is to teach people how to apply and keep a job. Many of them do not know what a resume' is; they do not realize how important it is to show up for work, to stay all day, and to not miss work. It seems like common sense stuff to you and me, but out here they have not had much of any kind of opportunity, and if you are never taught something you just don’t know automatically know it, no matter how rudimentary it is. If we start them with something, then maybe their third or forth job is closer to what they really want to do, but they have to learn how to start somewhere. We can help people find meaningful and gainful employment and we try to expedite that process both for the participant and for the employer. We make our employees more competitive by training them better than they have been trained in the past.

We are working with the schools; unfortunately the two systems have not been in sync. Because we are out of sync with each other, neither of us is keenly aware of the skill sets that are needed by today’s employers. We have come to find that 10% can and will regardless of what happens to them. Another 10% won’t do a damn thing regardless of what opportunities and training they receive. Our focus has been on the remaining 80%. Those are the ones that can and will if they are given the opportunity. There will always be a welfare class; we must address this problem, because if we turn our back on them, they will revolt. We must have a system in place to help them.
Mr. McNeil said that "The new Toyota plant west of San Antonio is a big deal here, because it is real jobs," with wages and benefits. The route to the plant is from Mexico through Uvalde, he noted, adding "We're always looking for a way into providing whatever we can for that facility, too. The new prison systems have been good to this area too. We are training guards and other support personnel for them. The commercial truck driving with NAFTA has produced some good jobs too. The medical field is good, and we have high demand for teachers in this area. We are serving all of these needs while remaining vigilant about finding other areas of high demand."

Tighter funding from the federal and state governments has "made our jobs harder to provide services, so we have to look for any partner and any funding source we can find," Mr. McNeil said. "The College has served the community much better in last 10 years than ever before in its recent history," adding

We enjoy a relationship with the College that is a great asset to our program. This relationship is why we've been able to provide the services and training in this area. Without them and their change in the past ten years, we could not have accomplished what we have solely on our resources. The College has been invaluable to us in getting these services out in the community and changes lives here in this region. It has not always been that way in the past, and I am very glad to see what has happened in outreach and development from SWTJC. The College presence in Del Rio and Eagle Pass has provided a source of real change in those communities. Those new buildings in both cities have provided the citizens with a sense of pride, and have created a sense of ownership of the College that did not exist before. There is no telling how many positive things
will come out of those branch campuses. Crystal City has continued to struggle because it has remained an agriculturally-based city. The Del Monte processing and canning plant is not what it used to be, and no other entity has come to the city to help make up for the Del Monte decline. Crystal City’s high migrant population has made it a hard place to change a culture that is itself resistant to change. The issues of the sixties militants in Crystal City still haunt that city today, almost forty years later. The College presence in that city is one of its few bright spots, and we have not given up hope for the citizens of Crystal City. We are as committed to serving them as we are to any of our region’s citizens.

Changing the Mindset to Promote Regional Economic Development

In 1994, Katsinas found the ethnic make up of SWTJC’s student enrollment to accurately reflect the racial/ethnic composition of the region, with a ratio of 70% Hispanic to 30% Anglo. Katsinas addressed what he termed SWTJC’s “tight wire” with its economic, political, and cultural dimensions, which its administration must walk: the money was held primarily by Anglos, and the votes are primarily controlled by Hispanics. The board was elected, so the Anglo members must receive Hispanic votes in order to serve. Fortunately, at the time of his visits, Katsinas wrote “the board for SWTJC has not been a place of fratricidal factional politics. But college administrators and Board Members have to be very sensitive to being open to both groups” (Katsinas, 1994, p.1). President Word reported his toughest two problems were negotiating the Colleges’ interests between the Anglos with money and the Hispanics with population and voting numbers, and negotiating between the five largest communities turfism. President Word said, “if we do something for one, we have follow suit with the others” (Katsinas, 1995). President Word, an Anglo, speaks fluent Spanish and is married to a woman of
Mexican descent. He greeted the families in Spanish at the graduation ceremonies. President Word, a rancher himself, was also very effective in working/communicating with the primarily Anglo-owned oil, natural gas, and agriculturally related industries.

This section discusses how the approach to economic development was changed by the College's participation in the Rural Community College Initiative. It was in the College’s newly designed distance education room, complete with state-of-the-art video conferencing and tele-course equipment purchased through the RCCI where I met with SWTJC's past President Billy Word. The high tech room seemed to be quite a contradiction with Mr. Word, a man who seemed to be from a different era of times long past. A tall, lean man, President Word had the dark tanned skin and deep lines that seemed so common in this part of Texas. President Word was very polite, intelligent, and funny. His voice and manners conveyed the ideals of what a college president “should be” and yet, I could not keep from thinking that President Word seemed to be as comfortable in this particular classroom as he would be on a large tractor on his ranch, or riding a horse out on the range. He conveyed an energy well beyond his years, and deep love for the region.

President Word began our conversation by telling me about the beginnings of the Ford grant, “It started in 1993, and the funding was tied to 11 different perimeters.” Our involvement with Ford made SWTJC a “myth buster, we busted the idea that minority schools can’t compete,” he said. While President Word did not want to make any excuses for his beloved College, he did admit to difficulties involved in creating a “regional identity,” and in building the credibility of SWTJC among outside community leaders, particularly beyond Uvalde, prior to involvement with the RCCI project:

Now I want you to get this straight, the benefits SWTJC got from the
RCCI project was not all about money. It’s not just about the cash; I’m talking about the fringe benefits, the intangibles, meeting new people, other professionals bringing new ideas and insight to the College. All the consultants we worked with were excellent; they helped us to catch up on some of the professional development we had been missing. When the money is tight, like it always was around here, it’s hard to send people out for training. We got isolated, locked into old ideas, and the Ford people really helped to change that about all of us. Now, I can’t say that the cash didn’t help though (big laugh) -- but the key to the money was that it was unrestricted-- that is the most important part of all, no restrictions like all the other money we have access to. Being unrestricted allowed us to do things we could have never thought of before, never had any hopes of doing. That is one of the biggest challenges facing small rural community colleges, a real lack of available funds without all these strings attached.

The credibility we got from being involved with Ford was big too. Before, it was real hard for us to talk to the people in Del Rio and Eagle Pass about what SWTJC could do for them. It was all about SWTJC as "that College in Uvalde," but Ford helped to change that. That increase in credibility spilled over from what was happening in Uvalde, and finally reached into the communities in Del Rio and Eagle Pass. It brought the College to them and made it ‘their College’, not just the one in Uvalde. The credibility boost started here in Uvalde, bringing in more people to get involved with what was happening locally with the College as the center. Ford brought people to the table that had never been interested before, and they all saw what they were missing!
It helped our people too, put a real sense of pride in all of us, to know that we were chosen to be part of the beginning really helped to swell a lot of chests around here. That's good, because sometimes it's hard to do when you are as far out and removed as we are out here. Ford put that spotlight on us, and damned if we didn’t all do our hardest to shine.

President Word exuded a sincere love for the area, its people, and the College. He also clearly understood the critical importance of higher education, a point he underscored as he related an experience on a recent road trip through the South:

What we are doing today with economic policies our forefathers did years ago with a bullwhip. Look around; minorities do all the manual labor. As we were driving through Mississippi and Louisiana, almost everybody working on those road crews were minorities, doing the back-breaking work because that is what we have for them to do. If we want to help the people that need it the most, we have to get down to their level. We have to do just like that Johnny Cash song says, ‘get down in the mud, the blood, and the beer.’

We have to look at our educational philosophy. Are we drenching the sheep for worms or are we slopping the hogs? When you drench the sheep; you have to corner them, hold’em down and shove that medicine down their throats. It’s real hard work and no one is happy; not the workers nor the sheep. But when you slop those hogs, they are so excited, so happy to get to that sweet slop you have to make sure that all of them can find a place, because each one is trying their hardest to get as much as they can. We are starting out with a lot of students with low self-esteem and real negative images and associations with education; do
we want to drench them like sheep on top of all that? If we change the way we do things, and we change their perceptions of what education can mean to them, then we’ll be fighting them off, and they’ be just like those hogs trying to get as much as they can. If we stay the way we have been, we’ll just be drenching ‘em and no one will ever be any better for it.

Cynthia Page of the Security Services Federal Credit Union was, in her own way, as excited as President Word about the changes she had witnessed at the College and in the surrounding areas through its participation in RCCI. Ms. Page felt the College’s involvement with the Ford Foundation was the genesis of the good things that had happened at SWTJC in recent years. “Everything good financially started with the Ford money, it started at SWTJC, and led to the increase in money for new technological facilities in Uvalde.” The increase in available capital installed a new confidence in the region and helped SWTJC move into the community focus, she said. The Ford money was the big new financial push that took the “junior” image out of Southwest Texas Junior College. She added "Ford's involvement had great timing with SWTJC’s success, with the major universities unable to keep up with enrollment; SWTJC has increased its abilities to offer programs to more students before they transfer.

According to Ms. Page it was the Ford involvement that moved the College into the eye of the community and helped to make workforce training a big issue in the region.

Before RCCI, the leadership at the College had not looked out into the local community. When the College began talking with regional business leaders the College began to hear the region’s call of “we need this here.” The Ford grant helped SWTJC to start looking out for community needs and asking the question of “how can we fill these needs.” When everyone looked around, they realized
how much money and resources were leaving the area. With Ford, the College starting working to make real increases in how much of that money stayed in the local economy, and that has had a tremendous impact in terms of local wealth.

Ms. Page believes that the Ford Foundation was the push that got SWTJC into the business of economic development:

Now local businesses look to the College for specialized workforce training and certification. Ford put technology that had been impossible to afford in the hands of the local people, and they loved it. It increased awareness of what was going on at the College with more citizens. Economic development has become a recruitment tool. The College starting seeing students taking technology classes, and that translated into other courses and programs. Economic development also helped the College escape the isolationism that had plagued it in the past. Ford got the College to look to other colleges for ideas, and then provided the capital and expertise to implement those new ideas. The Ford Foundation changed the community at SWTJC to include the region as well.

There have been many important spin-offs from the College’s new found position as a regional representative and conduit for regional economic development activities. The region thinks more regionally in how its public sector entities relate to one another. While the 1995 Texas Community College Enabling Law that added Frio and Medina Counties was not the result of SWTJC’s participation in RCCI, the fact that a leading public sector economic development entity—the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments also added those two counties—shows that economic developers are understanding the intimate linkages between higher education and regional economic development. Other spin-offs include the 1998
Telecommunications Infrastructure Grant of $1 million, and a $300,000 grant from the US Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Services Distance Learning Program, both of which expanded the College's SWTnet linkages to 22 area school districts and to key towns in the southwest Texas region.

These accomplishments go hand in hand with the above mentioned increase in access where the College is now able to provide the citizens the training they require and the job prospects and economic development and opportunities they so desperately need. While the phenomenon of what needs have to come first—the skilled workforce, or the opportunity for employment—speaks directly to the old “chicken and egg question” in economic development. In 1994, the College struggled to provide either, now in 2005 SWTJC and the Middle Rio Grande region has a whole “hen house” of both chickens and eggs.

Recent years have seen the College gain designation as a “Rural Enterprise Zone” through the federal government. The Middle Rio Grande region’s distinction as a Rural Enterprising Zone in its Futuro Proposal is certainly another example of how the area is now viewing economic development as a regional partnership and activity. Since a number of the College staff serve on the Futuro Board, which has representatives across county jurisdictional lines, and have played an integral part in the region, the College continues to entrench itself in the region's economic development activities.

While Val Verde County is not one of the five counties included in the Futuro Proposal, this has not stopped Southwest Texas Junior College from doing more to get involved with economic development in Del Rio. Dr. Don Tomas, the Associate Dean of Instruction for the Del Rio branch of SWTJC, has cultivated a number of relationships in Del Rio as he looks for partners in the community. One of these partners is Juan Gonzales, the Economic Development
Coordinator for the City of Del Rio. Mr. Gonzales’ background as an attorney and lobbyist in Austin are experiences he now uses on behalf of his native city. When Mr. Gonzales was asked why he was in Del Rio working on economic development, and he said, “Because I am from here Chris, this is my home.” He said he is trying to help change the mindset regarding economic development in Del Rio. He said he is often told by local business and industry leaders, “this is how we have done it forever,” and they are not quick to bring in or accept change. Even less inclined to create that change themselves. Juan explained that

Change here is seen as bad by the powerful because it means a loss of control by them. Even if they stood to gain much monetarily, the bottom line is about power and control. The lack of small business loans being made readily available are a good example of this mindset and phenomenon. If we want to grow as a community we have to change mentality of area. Without the change in mindset, every step along the way will be an uphill struggle.

When asked how to change a mindset in a community, his answer was, “We need outside development to increase the tax base. Look at NAFTA and Laredo, Eagle Pass and Del Rio are situated to have the same kind of growth, but we have not had it because of that fear of loss of control by a few.” The question Juan must answer is “how do I maintain that semblance of control by the powerful while change is occurring? The answer appears to be to fly ‘below’ the radar and simply get work done. Mr. Gonzales understands the power of education and he knows Del Rio must have qualified people for business to want to locate in area. The strong relationship with the branch of SWTJC in Del Rio has helped to bring more skills training to the area and the growth of the College and Sul Ross State University's offerings are areas of optimism. Gonzales said economic development was about four key points.
First, business development and second community development must be expanded; specifically housing, since a lack of quality rental apartments is an issue in Del Rio. Third, education must be addressed. Juan reported only 52% of Del Rio’s citizens having a high school diploma, and only eight percent hold a bachelor’s degree. Obviously there is not enough of either in area. Fourth, workforce training, i.e. can Del Rio give business the training required for their employees? This has been helped tremendously by the growth of the College in Del Rio.

In his 1994-95 site visits, Katsinas reported that many people he spoke with said a real challenge for regional economic development was developing a Hispanic middle class. Katsinas found few Hispanics serving on any Economic Development Boards, and saw this as an area where the RCCI could make a positive difference. Almost ten years later, Juan was still echoing these same statements, and while some progress had been made, it was clearly evident that more work remained to be done to more fully create a Hispanic middle class.

Juan said, currently, the only jobs available for people with degrees appear to be in education. This was a common problem found in my travels across the area served by SWTJC, and all of the people inside and out of the College agreed this must change if the area is to grow. Mr. Gonzales concluded by noting that,

The history of Del Rio is one divided by San Felipe Creek. This city represents a true depiction of the “north and south side of the tracks” kind of place. This goes back to the power in the hands of a few. Eagle Pass missed the boat for the kind of development seen in Laredo because those in power in the city wanted it that way. Del Rio is the same. But both Dean and Juan agreed that things seem to be
changing in the region. Creating new wealth is still regarded as dangerous to
“old money.” Everyone here is careful to tread lightly.

When asked about his safety, in light of the existing power relationships, Mr. Gonzales said he
has been threatened personally, but is not deeply concerned about his safety at this point. "If the
stakes get high enough though, or if enough people feel threatened, then it could become an
issue. We are not necessary dealing with all nice people," he said.
CHAPTER 6

THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND GOVERNING WEB

Introduction

This chapter examines how Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) changed internally following its involvement in the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). A close examination of the College's administrative structures before RCCI involvement in 1994 and after the formal conclusion of RCCI in 2002 will be made. This chapter is based upon data obtained from SWTJC's Office of Institutional Advancement, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and other data sources, as well as extensive interviews of the College’s administrative staff, including its President, Deans, its Associate Deans responsible for administration of its branch campuses, and members of its Board of Trustees.

In 1995, Katsinas found the College on the verge of transformation. Its administration and community leadership was committed to positive change, but apprehensive and even a bit scared about what change might bring, in terms of new roles to be played for which they had not been professionally prepared. Still, there was excitement about what the College might become; its people genuinely believed in the institution, despite being part of an inward looking culture that offered little in the way of incentives for ingenuity and professional development opportunities, isolated from its rural community college peers. In 1994, SWTJC was known as a strong college transfer institution that offered limited curricula in technical and vocational areas leading to jobs in the region, and very limited non-credit workforce training opportunities for currently employed workers. The College was not seen as a player in economic development. It

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was "Uvalde's college." and enrollments at its branch campuses were small. In 1994, the College struggled to fund growth in a time of continual decreases in state appropriations.

The College's leaders recognized Katsinas’ 1994 description as an accurate reflection of the institution and its role in the area. As one of its first steps toward transformation, the College submitted a Ford Foundation grant report that included this statement: “A leadership vacuum has existed in the college's service area and SWTJC will be assuming this responsibility, not as a domineering organization, but rather as a concerned catalyst for positive progress” (Bennett, p. 9, 1995). The purpose of this chapter will be to examine the evolution of SWTJC’s administration as the College participated in the Rural Community College Initiative. It will be organized as follows: An Expanded Administrative Structure for a Transformed College, Evolving Relationship Between the Branch and Main Campuses, The Physical Plant, and Voices of the College's Leadership.

An Expanded Administrative Structure for a Transformed College

"The College is ready for a quantum leap," then-President Billy Word told Katsinas in 1994, in his first visit to SWTJC. Leap the College did: Ten years later, after 64% growth in students, SWTJC's branch campuses had enrollments approaching those found at the main campus in Uvalde, and the College had transformed to become the region's hub for higher educational and workforce training in the Middle Rio Grande region of Texas. Both access and economic development had been significantly extended. Increased access was provided via new distant learning technologies, increasing its enrollments in adult basic education, and workforce training programs. The RCCI's goal of expanding the internal institutional capacity can be documented through the tremendous growth of grant-funded activities that occurred, which in turn broadened the revenue sources available to the College. As shall be shown in chapter 9
"Financing the Colleges Growth," that follows, in 1995, grants accounted for $5,066,217 or 33% of the College's $15,569,633 million budget; by 2004, grant-funded activities brought $12,454,787 to the College, or 44% of the College's $28,347,997 million budget. All of the aforementioned change, including most especially its branch campus growth, occurred while the College continued to do what it had always done best, general education for baccalaureate degree transfer. This is evidenced by SWTJC’s performance as reported in the Student Migration Reports of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), which note SWTJC's better than state average rates for Fall to Fall retention every year since 1996 (Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, Fall 2003).

With the purpose to better serve the growing educational and economic development needs of the region the College was restructured and enlarged. This new role is reflected not only its size, complexity, and the presence of more specialized functions and expertise, but also in its mindset and approach. The 2000-01 organizational chart shows the College administration as it existed from 1996 to 2003 before a major restructuring, which is shown in the 2003-04 organization chart.

One of biggest challenges facing SWTJC and many rural community colleges are personnel issues. As President Word said, “You make due with what you have got.” Many rural colleges suffer because they have personnel in areas where the college is not best served. On the other hand, these colleges are the ones where qualified professional personnel are hard to come by and sometimes even harder to keep. Katsinas wrote, “This brings us to another reality of rural community colleges: the great length of time it takes simply to get your leadership team in place.” Like many rural community college’s SWTJC struggled to keep up with professional development opportunities for its staff. Katsinas wrote, “There is still a critical shortage of
professional development, especially for senior staff such as division heads, associate deans, and deans” (Katsinas Informal Site Notes, 1995). Katsinas felt this was an area of extreme need for the college’s staff and he reiterated to President Word how professional development for staff would only become more important as the college continued to grow. He believed this was an area where participation with RCCI could really help the college, both in having senior members travel to other colleges and by having RCCI staff visit SWTJC.

In 1994, the administration of SWTJC was led by the President as chief executive office, and four deans, with responsibilities for Admissions and Student Services, Community Services, Instructional Services, and Business and Fiscal Affairs. There were eight divisions of instruction inside the college: Business, Applied Science, Humanities and Fine Arts, Library, Science and Math, Social Studies and Physical Education, the Del Rio Center, and the Eagle Pass Center. In 1994, persons with the title director led the following administrative areas: Administrative Services, Upward Bound, Student Activities, Financial Aid, Computer Center, Physical Plant Operations, and Food Service. The Law Enforcement Academy and the Institutional Research Office were led by coordinators. In 1993, an Institutional Effectiveness Officer was added. In 1994, SWTJC was staffed by 71 full-time professional faculty, 54 support staff members, 23 building and ground maintenance employees, 17 food service personnel, 2 dormitory supervisors, 4 Deans, and the President, adding to a total of 172 full-time College employees (SWTJC Agency Strategic Plan, pp. 10-11, 1994-2000).
Figure 6. Southwest Texas Junior College Organizational Chart, 2000-2001.

SOUTHWEST TEXAS JUNIOR COLLEGE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART, 2000-01

CONSTITUENCY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

PRESIDENT

ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT (vacant)
   Director, Adult Basic Education

DEAN OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES
   Chair, Applied Science Division
   Registrar

DEAN OF ADMISSIONS & STUDENT SERVICES
   Chair, Business Division
   Counselors

DEAN OF BUSINESS & FISCAL AFFAIRS
   Chair, Humanities & Fine Arts Division
   Director, Financial Aid
   Director, Physical Plant

DEAN OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT & TECHNOLOGY
   Chair, Library Division
   Director, Student Activities
   Bookstore Manager
   Coordinator, Institutional Research
   Director, Computer Center
   Coordinator, Institutional Technology
   Institutional Development Officer

Chair, Science & Math Division
   Director, Student Services
   Food Service Manager
   Coordinator, Student Recruitment & Job Placement

Chair, Social Studies & P.E.
   Dormitory Supervisors
   Purchasing Agent Officer
   Public Information Officer

Associate Dean, Del Rio Center
   College Nurse
   Coordinator, Campus Police

Associate Dean, Eagle Pass Center
   Transportation Mechanic

Director, Child Development Center
   Director, Student Support Services

Director, Tech-Vocational Education
   Coordinator, Student Recruitment & Job Placement

Director, Tech-Prep Program

Coordinator, Special Populations

Coordinator, Skills Enrichment Center

Data Source: SWTJC Factbook 2000-2001
Figure 7.

Southwest Texas Junior College Organizational Chart, 2003-04

Board of Trustees

President

Dean of Admins & Student Services

Food Ser. Dir.
Registrar

Campus Police
College Nurse
Counselor
Domitory Super.
Financial Aid Dir.

Dean of Institutional Adv & Tech
Adult Basic Ed. Dir.
Computer Center Dir.
Inst. Dev. Coor.
Print Center Coor.
Public Infir. Officer
Special Popse Coor.
Workforce Train. & Dev. Dir.

Asso. Dean, Del Rio Cnt
Asso. Dean, EP Cntr
Bookstore Manager
Business Office Coor.
Child Dev. Ctr. Dir.
Controller/Act. Dir.
Curriculum & Inst. Dir.

Physical Plant Dir.
Technical Ed. Dir.
Tech-Prep Pro. Dir.
Tech-Prep Coor.
Admin. Services Director

Dean of Instructional Services

Data Source: SWTJC Factbook 2003-2004
The College's tremendous enrollment growth, from 3,139 in Fall 1994 to 5,140 in Fall 2004 is naturally reflected in its more complex administrative structure. In 1994, SWTJC had a total of 172 full-time employees (SWTJC Agency Strategic Plan, pp. 10-11, 1994-2000), compared to 324 full-time College employees in 2004, an 88% increase. In 1994, SWTJC employed 71 full-time faculty; in 2004 104 were employed, a 46% increase. In 1994, the College employed 54 administrative, technical, and professional support staff; ten years later it employed 99 persons in such roles, an increase of 83%. In 1994, SWTJC employed 40 persons in building and maintenance and food service positions, in 2004, 67 persons were employed in these roles, an increase of 66%. In terms of key leaders, in 1994 the College had a president, four Deans, two associate Deans for the Del Rio and Eagle Pass Centers, five division/department heads, and two dormitory supervisors. In 2004, SWTJC had one president, three Deans, two Associate Deans in charge of the branch campuses in Del Rio and Eagle Pass, and nine division and department heads.

There are several new functions listed in the 2004-04 organizational chart that did not exist in 1994 when SWTJC began RCCI participation including: Dean of Institutional Advancement and Technology, Workforce Training and Development Director, Curriculum and Instruction Director, Technical Education Director, Child Development Center Director, Institutional Development Coordinator, Institutional Research Coordinator, and Public Information Officer.

The College added several new administrative and professional positions in direct response to its participation in RCCI. With the receipt of its initial RCCI implementation grant funding from the Ford Foundation, the position of Dean of Technology and Institutional Advancement was added in 1996, a position which Blaine Bennett has served since its creation.
This new position was needed in response to the explosion of technology that occurred at the College in response to RCCI activities, including the SWTnet Consortium of 22 area high school districts, video conferencing, and Internet classes. The College's first Institutional Research Coordinator was added, in order to better document the College’s programs and activities under RCCI. Today, Mrs. Carol LaRue heads up the Institutional Effectiveness activities of the College. A third key position directly added as a result of RCCI funding was an Institutional Resource Coordinator; that person, Susan McCormick, is the College’s only full-time grant writer, another area of weakness improved through RCCI participation. A Public Information Officer, Willie Edwards, a first for SWTJC, was added as RCCI participation necessitated the hiring of specialized expertise to assist the College in marketing itself regionally. Finally, the College added a Workforce Training and Development Director, Romelia Aranda, who is based at the Eagle Pass Campus. The five-fold increase in workforce training credits, from about 20,000 to about 100,000 in ten years resulted directly from investments made possible by SWTJC's participation in the RCCI.

In 2003, the College faced a conundrum with the resignation of its Dean of Business and Fiscal Affairs, Leslie Kramer. Funding from the Ford Foundation had ended, and in February of that year, the State of Texas mandated that its community colleges give back 7.5% of the previously appropriated state dollars. Since the fiscal year had started in September of 2002, this meant a cut of approximately 15% of state funding in the final six months of the fiscal year. In light of these severe cuts, the President called his remaining three Deans and the Director of the Business Office together, and they discussed folding Dean Kramer’s responsibilities into the remaining three Dean’s positions, and adding additional director positions for the support staff. The group agreed it could be done, and the current three-Dean system employed by the College
was birthed. Hector Gonzales, the Director of the SWTJC Business Office, was named the new Dean of Instructional Services, and the new positions of Curriculum and Instruction Director, and Controller/Accounting Director were created.

It is important to note that while growing in employees, the College significantly expanded its diversity. Table VII-D in the following chapter on Curriculum and Faculty shows that the College has been able to add both Hispanics and Anglos to its faculty and staff ranks, a point of critical import given the persistent high unemployment, which means that jobs with benefits at the College are among the highest paid positions in the region. In 2004, 60% of the College’s employees were Hispanic, and 37% were Anglo. By the fall of 2004, the College employed 104 full-time faculty, of whom 39% were Hispanic and 59% were Anglo. The College employed 99 administrative, technical, and professional staff, of which 61% were Hispanic and 35% were Anglo. The College had 67 employees in maintenance, of which 72% were Hispanic and 21% were Anglo. In office and clerical, the College employed 54 people, of which 81% were Hispanic and 19% were Anglo, and the College employed three African Americans, all in maintenance. It is clear that today the College's employment ranks better represent the diversity found in the population than before RCCI. While RCCI cannot be said to be directly responsible for this diversification, the fact remains that RCCI set the stage for growth at the College, and it was the expanding budgets that allowed for the new positions to be added among SWTJC's faculty and staff. Thus, if the RCCI's benefits were not direct, there is clear evidence here of strong indirect benefits.

The Evolving Relationship Between the Branch and Main Campuses

The explosions in growth for the branch campuses in Del Rio and Eagle Pass have meant numerous changes for Southwest Texas Junior College. As the branch campuses enrollment and
FTE's climb and match the numbers at the main campus in Uvalde, the relationships between the three campuses will continue to evolve. There is no question about Uvalde's place as the main campus of the College, especially since the highest level administrators for the branch campuses by custom or by SWTJC Board policy (it is unclear to the author which) must reside in Uvalde. This means that both Associate Deans of Instruction for the Del Rio and Eagle Pass campuses must make round trips in excess of one hundred miles everyday to their respective campuses and back to Uvalde. While the chief executive officers for each branch campus resides in Uvalde, the majority of the faculty and staff at the branch campuses lives in Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and the surrounding areas. As each branch campus adds faculty and staff to serve their growing enrollments, this trend of residing locally is likely to expand and continue.

It was the inability to spend taxes collected from the taxing-district, outside of the three counties that comprise it, that pushed SWTJC to create the SWTJC Foundation. The SWTJC Foundation financed the building of the branch campuses in Del Rio and Eagle Pass and is comprised of the same members as the SWTJC Board of Trustees. Those members are only elected from the three county taxing-district of Uvalde, Real, and Zavala Counties. This means that the remaining eight counties in the state assigned-service area, which includes Val Verde (Del Rio) and Maverick (Eagle Pass), have no representation on neither the Board of Trustees, nor the SWTJC Foundation. This puts added pressure on the Board of Trustees to be inclusive in thoughts and practices regarding the region.

Because of the lack of representation on the Boards, I asked President Sosa if he believed that the branch campuses would ever be inclined to break away from the College, and from Uvalde, in an effort to affect more local control over the institutions. With the continued increases in both Del Rio's and Eagle Pass' population, and the branch campuses themselves, and
the relatively flat growth of Uvalde, this is an opportunity for conflicted interests. President Sosa assured me that the branch campuses would never break from the main campus, because as he said, "We provide them with outstanding services, and they do not have to pay taxes. It is a win-win situation for them." I posed this same question to the Board President, Rodolfo Flores, and he echoed President Sosa's statements, adding, "Since they do not pay taxes, it helps to keep their county taxes low, and by our maintaining the facilities, it allows those two counties to invest their money locally into the k-12 system, where it is so desperately needed."

The College President

The first formal meeting of my initial 2002 site visit to the College was with the President, Dr. Ismael Sosa. President Sosa is a long time employee with SWTJC and has held numerous positions on the faculty and in the administrative ranks. President Sosa worked his way to the top of SWTJC and it shows in his ability to build coalitions among all the ranks of the College. A naturally warm and charismatic leader, President Sosa put me at immediate ease as we sat at the conference table in his office.

When speaking of the some of the ways participating in the RCCA project has changed things, President Sosa said, “We (SWTJC) know everybody out here now, we invite all of them from the eleven county service area here to the College to be part of our newly found regionalism.” The idea of a cooperating regionalism had its seeds in early 1994 with the involvement with the Ford Foundation. Before then the idea of regionalism was scary, but now with the developments from the RCCA project, a forty-six county legislative summit has been formed. The idea of local survival is directly tied to the areas ability to rely on each other for support instead of the competitive spirit that had dominated the landscape in previous years. Through their work as partners with local high schools SWTJC has also created the “Southwest
Net or SWTnet,” boasting a membership of twenty-two schools. The ideas of cooperative partnerships and regionalism have also help to establish the UADF, the Uvalde Area Development Foundation, a group devoted to the improvement of the lives of the people they serve. SWTJC was seen in the past as “the Uvalde College, but this has changed. We are not just for Uvalde anymore, and we are seen as being for the entire region and that has been directly translated into success for all of us.”

President Sosa said, “Being involved with Ford changed our vision—we are now a Community College, a place of learning and improvement for the community.” One of the biggest challenges facing this community is adult illiteracy and low high school graduation rates. “We see adult development education as very important. Just as we view the young people as a valuable resource, we must do what we can to help the entire community.” SWTJC is doing some remarkable things when it comes to reaching out to the area high schools. In counties where College attendance rates are frightfully low, SWTJC has formed partnerships with local high schools to offer “two plus two programs.” High school students can now take advance placement course concurrently with their high school classes and earn College credit. With 15% of SWTJC students coming in as GED graduates, SWTJC boasts a 70% transfer rate. The high levels of success by their former students attest to the solid academic and social foundations the College is providing for its students.

Being involved with the Ford Foundation helped to change the campus culture in other ways too. Before their involvement with Ford, the College received only a few grants per year, but now they are actively seeking out and securing numerous grants each year. “Grant writing has become part of our culture now, and we will use this new skill to help us keep the momentum gained by the Ford Foundation grant,” remarked President Sosa. In his final
statement of our interview President Sosa summed up his feelings about the future and role of SWTJC, “We can do more to help.” I found this a fitting last quote from a leader who has already done so much to help the spirit of the people in this historically impoverished area of our country.

The Board Chair

The College has enjoyed a stable and supportive Board of Trustees since its inception. While the administrative organization of the College has changed since 1994, its Board of Trustees has remained largely the same. The College Board of Trustees is composed of seven members elected at-large by the taxing-district counties of Uvalde, Real, and Zavala. The board members hold their positions for six-year terms, with an election occurring every other year. As Katsinas noted in 1994, the Board has enjoyed stable membership and non-fratricidal politics over its lifetime of service to the college (Katsinas, 1994, p.2). The SWTJC Board of Trustees is presided over by its Board President, Mr. Rodolfo Flores. Board President Flores is himself a SWTJC graduate, who worked his way through college picking fruit and shearing sheep. With his associate's degree from SWTJC in hand, he was admitted into St. Mary’s Law School in San Antonio. He later served as Chief of Staff under Dolph Briscoe, the individual to serve two four-year terms as Governor of Texas, from 1971-1979. Katsinas commented on SWTJC's good fortune to have had stable board membership. At that time, Trustees Rodolfo Flores and Bill Nunley had served for 18 and 19 years, respectively. The College had three presidents during its previous thirty years of existence, and appeared to maintain a level of non-partisanship in the community. The College’s three Anglo members had been recently re-elected, a feat only possible by the garnering of Hispanic votes. Katsinas wrote, “Maintaining the non-partisan
Rodolfo R. Flores has served on the Board of Trustees of SWTJC for three decades. Just before my May 2002 interview, he had been elected for another six year term on the Board, and, then as now, he serves as President of the SWTJC Board of Trustees, and also as President of the SWTJC Foundation. Mr. Flores has a long history with the College dating to his initial enrollment at SWTJC in 1948, shortly after its opening at the conclusion of WWII. Mr. Flores still continues to practice law with an office just off the town square in Uvalde.

Mr. Flores reminded me of SWTJC's legacy of strong academic performances of its students after they leave the College. He was also quite proud to tell me that every person in his family had attended the College since his time there. Using SWTJC as a springboard of opportunity was very important to Mr. Flores.

We have developed programs that have allowed our local students to remain in the area, and the distance education has provided access that was not available. You can’t find local people who haven’t been touched by the College in some way. Our involvement with RCCI helped us to look for local partnerships with businesses. We started training them, and they started hiring them. NAFTA also helped to drive our success; it has increased the demand for training for diesel mechanics, truck drivers, and airplane mechanics. Refrigeration training has been another big one for us. We couldn’t survive out here without air conditioning. Because of our local partnerships, we are able to offer our services at a low cost to the community. It makes us partners each other’s success.
As he had in our previous May of 2002 meeting, Mr. Flores assured me he had no “agendas” for the College. He said that many people asked him “What is your agenda for the College, what does Rudy Flores want?” In 2004 he again said “Chris, I have no agendas, I just want what is best for the College. As long as I am the President of the Board, I am responsible to the College and to the region to do what is best for everyone. I hold that trust sacred. My goal is to keep steering the Board in the best direction.”

The Physical Plant

I awoke one morning during my July site visit and went for a jog around campus at 7 AM. Overall, the campus still very quiet, a few people milling around, work crews finishing up the yard work leftover after the heavy rains last week. It took about twenty minutes to follow the landscaped perimeter of the campus. Once I got to the rear of the campus, near the auto body repair and welding shops, turning south I found my way back to the SWTJC Rodeo Arena on the backside of the campus. I ran past overgrown shrubs and a low lying ditch area. I saw a cottontail rabbit, numerous terns (a long-legged, brown and white, medium-sized bird) that shrieked, ran, and then flew away. There were goats in the pens near the arena, I later asked Hector Gonzales, the Dean of Instruction, about them and he said they were used by the Rodeo Club for roping practice.

I came back around the arena and ran past the high ropes course area. This brought me back to the main campus and back around the new Sul Ross buildings and the moter-pool area of the college. From this I made my way back along the main road on the edge of the campus along side the airport. The road was called Sul Ross Drive, and while not a busy road, there always seemed to be a truck or two roll past me as I huffed and puffed my way back to the dorm room. I would repeat the run/walk around the campus numerous times over the following weeks and
again when I returned in May of 2005. I relished this first hand experience of the SWTJC campus. From the habanera peppers in front of the ABE building, planted by the grounds keeper named Leah, to the twelve reported rattlesnakes killed on the campus by the maintenance staff in 2004, it is a fascinating and beautiful campus.

The growth at the College's main campus in Uvalde and at its branch campuses required SWTJC to rethink how it operates and administers its physical plant and maintenance staff. In 2001, Mr. Oscar Garcia was hired by SWTJC to head these divisions as the Physical Plant Director. From my visits to the campuses, and my discussions with him, it appears that he had been doing a fantastic job of not only handling current growth, but also planning for the future. During my usual morning walk around the campus, on the morning of my meeting with Mr. Garcia, I paid particular attention to the physical surroundings.

Our meeting began with Mr. Garcia sharing giant poster board-sized aerial pictures of the College, discussed over the conference table in the President’s Office. The photographs were a constant reminder of the airport right next door to the College, and SWTJC's origins from Garner Army Air Force Base during WWII. From these photographs and my morning walks, it was easy to digest the changes taking place across the physical plant that Mr. Garcia discussed. It was also evident how much Mr. Garcia loved the College. Indeed, later that morning he exuded great pride during our time together, a portion of which occurred while riding around the main Uvalde campus. The changes in the physical plant were obvious even to the uninitiated, like me. Buildings were being remodeled, landscaping was being added to and refined, and accommodations required by the Americans with Disabilities Act were being implemented.

Like most of SWTJC’s employees, Mr. Garcia has deep roots in the region. He arrived at SWTJC first as a student, and later as an employee. His family is from Kingsville in south
Texas, where they had worked on a large ranch. It was his desire to become a pilot, so he came to SWTJC at the age of 19 to study aviation. Mr. Garcia had previous experience in the construction trades and those skills led him into welding and steelwork as part of the remodeling efforts of SWTJC's Wagner Building and Richards Business Office on the Uvalde campus in the late 1970s and early 1980s. With his background in construction, he sought and was offered a job at the College. He eventually finished his training to be a pilot, but found little work in aviation for a pilot with only single engine plane experience. He went back to Kingsville for two years to help his family.

He then returned to SWTJC and started the campus police department, and while on campus earned his baccalaureate degree in Criminal Justice from Sul Ross Rio Grande College. He left SWTJC to work for Uvalde Police in DARE (Drug Awareness Resistance Education) Program, where he was employed for the next ten years. In 2001, he came back to work in the College’s Physical Plant, and was soon promoted to his current position. Today he oversees all aspects of the physical plants on all four campuses. Mr. Garcia noted the intertwining web of the college and the community, when he told me, “We are truly a community college for this area Chris. We address needs of the community. When you look at us, you see that the Mayor of Uvalde is on staff as director of the Adult Basic Education Program. We have professors on area school boards, and I myself am the chair of this area's Enterprising Zone Committee”

We drove around the campus and talked about all of the landscaping, the buildings, and the area. Our conversation covered many topics as we moved from one area to another. Oscar told me about the buildings the College had constructed for Sul Ross in Uvalde, Del Rio, and at Eagle Pass. He said after attending a “Closing the Gaps” conference he was convinced that distance learning was the key to future growth of the College. We talked about the deregulation
of power and some of the problems it has caused for the College. In 2004 the College was leasing power transformers for $15,000 because they had no other choice. To purchase them outright would make SWTJC responsible for their repair, and at that time there is no one in the area that could get parts or service them. The College’s only choice was to lease the transformers, but this was not good as a long-term solution because it costs the College a tremendous amount of money.

In this semi-arid climate the carefully manicured emerald lawns and multiple colorful native flowers were a sharp contrast to the many shades of dusty browns and grays seen in the landscape surrounding the campus. The plethora of colors on campus spoke to the skill and dedication of the campus grounds crew, one of the many committed groups of people working for the College.

I complemented Oscar on the ascetics of the campus; the many potted flowering plants, the numerous plant beds that brought so much color to the grounds. He told me he has used and encouraged more zero-scaping for campus and everyone liked the results. The campus greenhouse had fallen into disuse and disrepair. He and his staff helped to fix the greenhouse, and now with his crack landscaping crew of Leah, they are using the greenhouse for growing all of the potted, flowering, and bed plants for the campus. Oscar bought a wood shredder from the Uvalde County and they grind all the left over tree trimmings on-site for mulch. He wanted to continue in this philosophy; by using more of what the College has on-site and cut costs. This idea of self-reliance is not only important to the people in this region; it has been an integral part of the campus history.

Oscar told me when building anything now, they build-in for extra growth in the future, and that any new construction for the College must be Americas with Disabilities Act (ADA)
compliant. Since many of the buildings on the campus are pre-ADA, they were grandfathered in from modifications, but when the College makes any upgrades they must make everything compliant.

He told me he had to retrain the campus on how to think about Physical Plant Operations. He said when he first began he had too many work orders being approved and it created a backlog that put them very behind. After working on that system they were able to catch up with what was already approved by the board first, and then move methodically on the projects at the campuses. This helped to alleviate the frustration of tasks not being completed in a timely manner, and to stem the backlog of work-orders so things could be prioritized. It was this kind of approach to problem solving that made me like Oscar so much. He sincerely wanted to do a good job for the College and work to make it a better place.

We continued to ride around the campus and he showed me all the different buildings and what they could become in the future. The campus looks good but it was getting older and more difficult to maintain. Now some buildings have qualified as historic buildings they cannot be torn down or drastically changed. This puts the onus on the College to maintain their physical structures, provide them with costly heating and cooling, and deal with high costs of renovations. The Historic Building status was a mixed blessing indeed.

Voices of the College's Leadership

Many of the College’s employees I spoke with told me they had grown up in the area, moved away to obtain more education, and returned. Each said they came back because this was the area they wanted to be. I heard this same story again and again as I spoke with the staff of the College. It seemed like all of them had left at some time or another, and then they had all chosen to come back, seemingly called by the College to come home and give back to their
community. The ties to the area among the staff at Southwest Texas Junior College are easy to find and the roots of the people to this part of Texas run deep. This has been one of the cornerstones of their success with the RCCI; everyone involved has a deeply vesting interest in the success of the program and its outcome as it relates to the success of the community.

After a late morning breakfast taco at the student center, I had a meeting with Dean of Institutional Advancement and Technology, Blaine Bennett. Blaine had grown up in the area and attended SWTJC during the summers when he was home from the University of Texas at Austin. Like so many others, Blaine had come home to Uvalde to work for the College, because it was where he wanted to be. We talked about all kinds of things as we met over the course of three hours. With our shared backgrounds in counseling Dean Bennett and I always had an easy time discussing any manner of issues. There is no doubt of the importance of Dean Bennett on the SWTJC administrative staff. He has been a cornerstone administrator for a number of years and is charged with not only keeping up with technology but for finding ways to pay for it as well. Dean Bennett’s sincere love for SWTJC shines through to me every time we have gotten together.

With his tall, slender build, his usual coat and tie, Dean Bennett comes across as the quintessential college administrator; a kind man with a sharp mind. He is a soldier for the College and he takes his leadership position within the College as a very important charge for his community. Dean Bennett is a key “go to guy” at the College, and whether they are talking about new computers for the branch campuses, reconfiguring College networks and servers, or saying the opening prayer for the Board of Trustees meeting, Dean Bennett is consistently called upon and he always answers the call of duty.
During our three-hour discussion, about the College, RCCI, and higher education in rural America, Dean Bennett shared his fear about not being able to maintain the momentum the College experienced under RCCI. He said, “Chris you can’t finance a college on grants and loans. With the decreased state and federal investments in higher education everyone is looking for new funding streams and new sources of revenue and the area of technology is inherently more difficult to keep up with because of its the incredibly fast paced nature of constant change”(Personal communication, July, 2004).

Dean Bennett did feel the infrastructure that the College acquired from the RCCI leveraged money was crucial for their future development. The RCCI money helped the College secure TIF (Texas Infrastructure Funds) to help build the SWTnet, a consortium of local high schools that are now connected through the college for distance learning and video conferencing. The infrastructure development has been crucial for the College to be able to move forward into the twenty-first century and keep pace by having a solid telecommunications and internet system developed that can be expanded upon (Personal communication, July 9, 2004).

One of the requirements made by the Ford Foundation and RCCI to SWTJC was to hire a full-time institutional researcher. Because the College was expanding its services and growing in number of students and staff, and since the College was beginning to look outside itself more than it had ever done before in its history, RCCI felt the College should gain a more thorough understanding of its data. The first person to hold the position was Dr. Mitchell Burchfield, who since has returned to the faculty ranks. Carol LaRue is the second person to hold this position. Ms. LaRue was a very nice and intelligent woman, kind at heart, with a soft spot for nature. She and her husband lived in a tiny hamlet named Utopia, about fifty miles due North of Uvalde. She commuted the one-hour plus distance every day, and said she would never dream of moving.
She was originally from Wisconsin, and her fair hair and skin stand out in this region, where it is difficult to stay out of the sun, and many people appear deeply tanned, brown, or black headed.

Prior to her arrival at SWTJC in 2003, she worked in the Institutional Effectiveness Office at Del Mar College, a community college in Corpus Christi, Texas. Ms. LaRue had no staff directly under her, and was therefore a one-woman shop. She also was one of the very few people interviewed by the author who had not been promoted from within the College's ranks, coming from the outside, and who did not have deep family ties to the Middle Grande region of Texas (it will be interesting to learn, ten years from now, if the College diversifies its ranks by making significant hires from outside the region). Ms. LaRue believes her presence has helped to change the College’s mindset about institutional effectiveness (IE). She said she treads lightly in her first year at the College; she let people get to know who she is, and now was ready to propose changes and improve IE at SWTJC.

The College's tremendous growth during its time of RCCI participation, and its new image as a regional service provider resulted in the hiring of its first Director of Public Relations. Mr. Willie Edwards, who previously worked for Uvalde High School and for the Uvalde newspaper, the Uvalde Leader-News, before coming to the College, was brought on board shortly after my first visit to SWTJC in May of 2002. His office was housed in the same building as the student newspaper, which is another responsibility of his. As is common with rural community college administrators, more than one hat is commonly worn.

Mr. Edwards works with all aspects of the College’s public relations activities, including print and electronic media. His job responsibilities include maintaining the websites for all four of SWTJC's campuses (Uvalde, Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and Crystal City), no small task. Mr. Edwards indicated at times he felt the need for assistance, as there was always too much to cover
and stay current with, and that work maintaining the website kept him from further work to
improve other aspects of the College's public relations efforts and campaigns. "I could spend
every hour of every day doing nothing but updating the website for the four campuses, and still
not get everything up on them," he said. During my interview with him, Mr. Edwards arranged
an appointment for me to accompany him to the Uvalde Leader-News to be interviewed by the
College beat writer about my research project (while interviewed by the beat writer, to my
knowledge my story was never published).

Like most of the College's employees, Mr. Edwards' family possesses long ties to the
area. His grandfather migrated to Uvalde at the turn of the last century, and his family still
maintains the 120-acre riverside property on the Nueces River his grandfather homesteaded. Mr.
Edwards built a fantastic home along the river, about 29 miles out of town, which he allowed me
to use to write, and fish, and paint. It was a welcome reprieve from the dormitory room in which
I was living at the College. The view off the back porch was breathtaking, with a host of wildlife
visibly abundant. I caught numerous bass, perch, and a few catfish in the river. The water was a
clear, deep blue, and very cold compared to the 100+ degree outside temperature in July. These
rivers are a constant source of refreshment and relaxation to all the citizens in this area during the
summer.

It is striking to note that Carol LaRue was one of the few SWTJC employees, neither
originally from the region, or a long time inhabitant. A majority of faculty and staff from the
region at any college can be thought of as a double edged sword because it leads directly to the
intertwining of the college and the communities it serves. On the positive side, having people
from the region means they are all highly committed to the area and tend to serve a multiplicity
of leadership roles in their communities outside of their roles at the college. For example, at
SWTJC, the Director of Adult Basic Education is also the Mayor of Uvalde. The Dean of Institutional Advancement and Technology, Blaine Bennett, serves on the local school board, and Romelia Aranda, the Director of Workforce Training and Development, husband has served as both a County Judge, and as the Mayor of Eagle Pass. While having people in dual roles can greatly assist the College to be connected to the region it serves, it is also not without its negatives.

One of the biggest negatives can come from excessive inbreeding of staff, bordering on nepotism, and the creation and maintenance of a culture resistance to change at the college. Many of the people with whom both Katsinas and I spoke, including former President Word, noted the critical importance of travel to gain external perspectives. It is my hope that subsequent years will see SIGNIFICANT investment in professional staff and travel at SWTJC, in order to maintain freshness of ideas and programs. There are numerous factors that make hiring outside professionals at rural community colleges difficult, including limited opportunities for spouses and significant others, lack of advanced medical facilities, limited entertainment venues, and few advanced educational opportunities. While these challenges must be acknowledged, the benefits of the bucolic lifestyle, the family orientated culture found in rural America, and their natural beauty, can all be powerful selling points for these colleges.
CHAPTER 7
THE CURRICULUM AND THE FACULTY

Introduction

At Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC), achieving the key RCCI goal of increased access from 1994 to 2004 has meant a dramatic increase in the numbers of students served. And increased numbers of students means increased numbers of faculty needed to teach them. In the course of its RCCI participation, SWTJC has most certainly experienced growth in both of these areas. From 1993-94 to 2003-04, SWTJC had almost doubled its total number of full-time faculty, from 60 in 1993-04, to 104 full-time faculty members in 2003-04, an increase of 73%. During this same approximate time frame, the College had also almost doubled their amount of degrees and certificates awarded, from a total of 280 awarded in 1994-95, to 589 awarded in 2003-04, an increase of 110%. While this growth and the changes it has brought the College have been dramatic, growth appears not to have shifted the Colleges’ mindset from its original intents and purpose: to reach and teach students, and impact lives for a positive change. The increasing number of SWTJC graduates, successful transfers, and newly trained workers are a testament to the commitment and dedication of SWTJC’s faculty.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe quantitatively and qualitatively the changes experienced by the College’s curriculum and its faculty. This chapter will be broken down into three sections: Curriculum Development and RCCI, Enrollment Growth and an Evolving Faculty, and SWTJC Faculty Voices.
Curriculum Development and RCCI

The Rural Community College Initiative was centered on two goals, increasing access to educational opportunities, and improving regional economic development. As discussed previously in Chapter 6, the Middle Rio Grande Region is one plagued by low-levels of adult educational attainment. During RCCI participation from 1994-2002, Southwest Texas Junior College refocused its attention and commitment to reversing the trend of low educational attainment, and against a daunting backdrop, made a good deal of success. In the 2003-2004 academic year, SWTJC set a new record for the number of degrees and certificates awarded. The 589 degrees and certificates awarded increased by 25% over 2002-2003 alone. The vast majority of those graduates were female (71%) and, an even larger majority were Hispanic (85%). In 2003-2004, 57% of the awards were for academic degrees, either Associates of Applied Arts, or Associates of Applied Science. The technical side of the house also posted significant gains, with the number of technical degree awarded increasing by 41% from the prior year, from 88 in 2002-2003, to 124 awarded in 2003-2004.

Chart VII-A, “Total Degrees and Certificates Awarded by Type,” shows the steady increase in awards across all three areas, academic degrees, technical degrees, and technical certificates. At the beginning of the College’s RCCI participation, SWTJC awarded 147 academic degrees, 54 technical degrees, and 79 technical certificates, for a total number of awards for 1994-1995 being 280. Over the course of RCCI participation, the College showed steady increases across all three categories. From 1995-96 until 2002-2003 the number of degrees and certificates the College awarded ranged in the 300s. Thus, the increase to 589 awarded in 2003-2004, a new institutional record, is clear evidence of the success of SWTJC in expanding access to educational opportunities along the border.
Table 4

Chart VIII-A
Total Degrees and Certificates Awarded by Type,
Southwest Texas Junior College, 1994-95 to 2003-04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Academic Degree</th>
<th>Technical Degree</th>
<th>Technical Certificate</th>
<th>Total Awards</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1994/1995</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/1996</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/1997</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>356</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: SWTJC Fact Book 2003-2004
The College has expanded its curriculum in response to the changing and growing needs of the students it serves. The growth at the branch campuses in Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Crystal City has also meant an increase in the numbers of programs offered at each campus. Chart VIII-B, “Programs Offered at SWTJC Campuses in 1994 and 2005,” shows the dramatic increase in new programs offered by the College. The College posted a 92% increase in the number of programs offered from 1994 to 2005.

It is also important to note that many of the programs which in 1994, were only offered in Uvalde, are now offered either partially or completely at Del Rio and Eagle Pass. In 2005, it is possible for a SWTCJ student to complete their entire Associates in Arts in, Business, Criminal Justice, Engineering, General Studies, or Teaching at the Uvalde, Del Rio, or Eagle Pass campus. SWTJC students can now partially complete Associates of Applied Science and Certificates in programs such as Administrative Information Technology, Child Development, and Criminal Justice-Law Enforcement at the Del Rio and Eagle Pass campuses. This remarkable achievement of expansion of services speaks directly to the RCCI goal of increased access by now providing these partial and complete programs at the Colleges branch campuses.
### Chart VII-B Programs offered at SWTJC Campuses in 1994 and 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs Offered</th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AA in Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood - Grade 4</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Specialist</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 8 - 12</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AAS/Certificate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS Agribusiness</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert Air Conditioning &amp; Refrigeration</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert Automotive Body Repair Tech</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert Automotive Technology</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS Career Pilot</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS Computer Information Systems</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert Cosmetology</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert Diesel</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert Homeland Security</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/ESC Management</td>
<td>U, DR</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert Nursing</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS Teacher Aid</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U, DR, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert Welding</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS/Cert Wildlife Management</td>
<td>Not Offered</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations**
- Cert - Certificate
- ESC - Enhanced Skills Certificate
- U - Uvalde
- DR - Del Rio
- EP - Eagle Pass
- DR-P - Del Rio Partial
- EP-P - Eagle Pass Partial

Data Source: SWTJC Institution Research
Chart VII-C “All Degrees and Certificates Awarded, SWTJC 1998-2004,” is another clear demonstration of how the College achieved its RCCI of increasing access to education in the region. This chart breaks down the total degrees and certificates awarded into the 28 categories that now exist at the College. The addition of 16 new degrees and certificates since 1994 represents a 133% increase in the number of programs now available to potential students. This can only be characterized as genuine progress in extending access.

The breakdown of the degrees and certificates awarded from 1998-2004 shows the largest number awarded to continue to be in the General Education/Liberal Arts category, going from 182 in 1998-1999, to 180 in 2003-2004, a decrease of one percent. The second highest category of awards was Business Administration, increasing from 16 awards in 1998-99 to 72 in 2003-04. This was an increase of 350%. Another large category for awards in 2003-04, was Child development, going from 23 in 1998-99, to 69 in 2003-04, an increase of 200%. In 1998-99, SWTJC gave out 38 awards in the Practical Nurse category, and it was the fourth highest award in 2003-04 at 52. This was an increase of 37%. Rounding out the top five awards in 2003-04, was Elementary Education, with 1 award in 1998-99, and 50 in 2003-04. This was an impressive 4900% increase.
Table 6

**All Degrees and Certificates Awarded**

**Southwest Texas Junior College, 1998 - 2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998/99</th>
<th>1999/00</th>
<th>2000/01</th>
<th>2001/02</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>Total Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Air Conditioning &amp; Refrigeration</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive Technology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Pilot</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Information Systems</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diesel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education/Liberal Arts</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>119</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Technology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Systems Technology</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Nurse</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Nursing (RN)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Dental</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Law</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Medical</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Pharmacy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Veterinary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>321</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>2,492</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Source: SWTJC Fact Book 2003-2004*
Enrollment Growth and an Evolving Faculty

SWTJC has been progressive in its hiring and promotion of leadership. Dean Gloria Rivera, who served as the Dean of Instruction before Hector Gonzales, the current Dean, was the first female in the history of the College to hold a Dean’s position at SWTJC. The leadership in the Administration has also been committed to making the faculty more reflective of the local population, and that means having a high number of Hispanics. In SWTJC’s Agency Strategic Plan for the 1992-1998 Period, the College set a goal on increasing minority faculty membership from 25% to 35% (Burchfield, p. 26, 1992). In the “Final Report Progress Toward Goals in SWTJC Agency Strategic Plan for 1992-1998 Period,” the College was able to claim excellent progress on the objective “To increase the percentage of minority faculty,” (Burchfield, p.11, 1998).

Table 7  Full-Time Faculty at SWTJC, 1993-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Amer.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SWTJC made strong progress toward its goal of hiring full-time Hispanic faculty as shown in table VIII-D. Beginning in 1993, the percentage of Hispanic and Black full-time faculty was 20%. It increased to 26% in 1995-96, 32% for the 1997-98 period, and had risen to 41% in 2003-04. Over the course of this 11 year period, from 1993 to 2004, the number of White, full-time faculty numbers increased from 48 to 61, a 27% jump. During that same period, full-time, Hispanic faculty member numbers increased from 12 to 41, a 242% increase. While the percentage of Whites employed by the College did decrease, the total number of Whites
employed by the College actually increased (Burchfield, 1998, LaRue, 2004). It is clear from these data that a rising tide lifts all boats.

By the Fall of 2004, SWTJC faculty ranks had swollen from 60 full-time in 1993, to 104 in 2004, an increase of 73%. While the College has not been able to make any headway with its numbers of African American faculty (still 0 in 2004), it has continued to make tremendous progress with its representation of Hispanics among the faculty ranks. According to IPEDS Report data 2004 cited from the *SWTJC Fact book 2003-2004* (LaRue, 2004, p. 62) minority faculty membership represented 50% among the male full-time faculty, and 65% among the female adjunct faculty.

In Table VII-E, “Fall 2004 Faculty at SWTJC,” the sex and ethnicity of SWTJC’s Fall 2004 faculty are broken down. In 2004, 55% of the full-time faculty was male and 51% of them were members of a minority group. For females, who comprised 45% of the full-time faculty, 30% were members of a minority group. Among the adjunct faculty ranks, 49% were male and 58% of the male adjunct faculty was members of a minority group. Among the female adjunct faculty, who comprised 51% of the total, 62% were members of a minority group. This demonstrates the College's successful commitment to increasing the number of Hispanic faculty members, both in the full-time and adjunct positions. Given the fact that the College is predominantly serving female students (71%), the lower numbers of female faculty may indicate an opportunity for the College to seek out additional female full time and adjunct faculty to better represent and serve its student population.
Table 8  *Fall 2004 Faculty at SWTJC*

**Fall 2004 Full-time Faculty**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Minority</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This same progress was demonstrated in the adjunct faculty ranks:

**Fall 2004 Adjunct Faculty**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjunct</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Minority</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Every College is built around its faculty and Southwest Texas Junior College is no different. The leadership of the faculty at SWTJC falls under the direction of the Dean of Instructional Services and Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Hector Gonzales. The current Dean of Instruction came into the position near the end of the College’s RCCI participation, and is charged with maintaining the momentum gained during the RCCI. Dean Gonzales’ family owns several small businesses in Uvalde, and Hector grew up there. He left Uvalde to obtain his Bachelor’s degree in Accounting from Angelo State University and upon graduation returned to help the family business. Since Dean Gonzales' parents had helped him through college, he agreed to work for the family business. He told me what he said to his father: “Dad look, you gave me three years of help and support, so I’m going to do the same for you.”

While working in an accounting office in Uvalde during this time, Mr. Gonzalez completed his Masters in Business Administration degree from Sul Ross Rio Grande College. He worked for businesses in Uvalde as well as Eagle Pass, and the surrounding cities, and served as an adjunct accounting professor for Sul Ross from 1995 to 2002. He obtained his Certified Public Accountant license in 1997. He saw an opening at the College, and began work for SWTJC in January of 1999 as the Director of Accounting and Controller for SWTJC under former Dean Kramer.

Words like “institution”, and the “keeper of the faculty” were used to describe a gentlemanly faculty member, Mr. Harry D. Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence's reputation precedes him. Prior to my interview, I had learned a great deal about Mr. Lawrence from his friends, coworkers, and peers. He had committed his life to education and more specifically, to SWTJC. Numerous people told me if I was to gain any sense of what faculty at SWTJC was thinking,
start by meeting Mr. Lawrence. From our first five minutes together, it was clear that the stories were true. He was very intelligent, kind, and quickly put me at ease.

Mr. Lawrence's academic journey began at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi. He then transferred to Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) in San Marcos, where he obtained his Bachelor's degree in History and Government in 1959. This was followed by a Master’s in Education (in History and Education) awarded in 1960. He then joined the Air Force, and served in the reserve branch for five years. He met Dr. Fly, SWTJC's President at the time, and Dean Mathews, the Dean of Instruction, while interviewing for a job as a History professor. In 1961, at the age of 24, he began working for the College. The institution employed just 16 full-time faculty at that time, he said. Mr. Lawrence was proud of the fact that he had missed only one day of work in 43 years of continuous employment with the College, and that was to have four wisdom teeth pulled. He was back at work the next day! He told me, “I have never gotten up in the morning and not felt like going to work.”

Mr. Lawrence expressed clear enjoyment in teaching and working with students. When asked what the students were like when he first started teaching at the College, he said,

Early on in my career the majority of students that came to College had a goal, some objectives, they knew what they hoped to accomplish. Now, today’s students are here because they don’t know where else to go and the money is here for them to go to college somewhere. I believe in the ideal of an extended adolescence. Many of our students do find their way at college.

As we spoke more about the students, Mr. Lawrence felt little had changed in the students in the past ten years. He did report seeing higher numbers of single females with children than ever before and that they were often his best and most dedicated learners. He also
felt that the College had made a shift from being such a “transfer dominated” institution to one that tries to do much more for and with its students and communities. He saw this is a positive change for the College, because it had not taken away from the strictly academic side of the house, while adding more benefits for everyone involved. As long as the College does not lose sight of its academic mission and focus, Mr. Lawrence said, he very much welcomed the changes for the College and the community.

Mr. Lawrence was asked about his teaching workload, and at which campus he teaches. He said he has taught at every branch campus, although in the last 10 years he has not taught that many at Del Rio or Eagle Pass. He usually teaches six or seven courses in the Fall and Spring and in the summer he teaches one or two classes. He also teaches for Sul Ross, and averages four to six classes a year for them. With the increased enrollment, SWTJC's curriculum is broadening, and Mr. Lawrence is now able to teach new subjects in History such as Russian History, History of Latin America, and the History of Mexico. He has served as the Division Chair for Social Studies and Kinesiology since 1974. As chair he is responsible for the division’s budget development and has Social Studies, Kinesiology, Psychology, Sociology, History, and Government.

I asked Mr. Lawrence about the College’s administration. He said during his forty-plus years at SWTJC, the Administration has always treated the faculty as professionals, and did not put obstacles in the way of them doing their jobs of teaching. He felt the College had been very fortunate in its past leadership, and that this good fortune had continued into the present day. He was very positive about the new Dean of Instruction, Mr. Gonzales, and saw him as an ally of the faculty. In the final portion of our conversation, I asked Mr. Lawrence if he had ever thought of
going to work at another institution. He smiled broadly and said, “Christopher, whatever for? You can’t put a price on my satisfaction with SWTJC.”

I had the opportunity to meet with another Professor of History, Barbara Blair. She had grown up in the region, attending high school in Carrizo Springs, a small town about 80 miles south of Uvalde. Her father traveled extensively while building airfields in Texas, a business that initially brought her family to Carrizo Springs. She attended Business College in San Antonio and after graduation moved to Dallas, where she worked as a secretary for the Texas Rangers. She then moved to Corpus Christi and had her first child, a son. After divorcing her husband, she moved back home to be with her family, and attended SWTJC from 1965 to 1967. Upon completing her Associate's Degree, she moved to San Marcos to attend Southwest Texas State University. She finished her Bachelors in History there in 1969, and while earning her Master's in History at San Marcos, she completed her teaching certificate. In 1970, a job teaching history opened up at SWTJC, and she has been employed by the College ever since.

When asked about changes at the College and in teaching pedagogy, she quickly replied “There has been a computer revolution. From teaching to learning, here and in distance education technology, all of this has changed the way we teach and the ways that students learn.” Ms. Blair has taught courses at all of the branch campuses and in most of the cities in the College’s service area. Now she only teaches in Uvalde. She has been the advisor for the College’s chapter of Phi Theta Kappa since 1976. The SWTJC Phi Theta Kappa Chapter is very active, and when I asked her about PTK at SWTJC she said, “PTK has given our better students a chance to travel, meet other students, and learn about things that other students do not have the chance to do. It has changed the lives of our SWTJC students and many PTK students receive PTK scholarships at the institutions where they transfer.” She said she has no regrets about her
time here at the College and she ended our conversation by saying, “I was blessed when I was offered the job to teach here, I have enjoyed the challenges of teaching, because I have never faced the same challenge twice. Every day is a new opportunity for growth, for me, our students, and the College.”

The last faculty member interviewed in July of 2004 was Professor John “Jack” Lampe. A tall and slender man, Mr. Lampe was very kind and unassuming. He asked me as many questions about what I was doing and learning as I did of him. I noticed a Dartmouth College degree hanging in his office, and asked him how he went from a college in northern New Hampshire to southwest Texas. He told me his father was a college basketball coach, and that it was his father’s transfer to coach ball at Dartmouth that got him there in the first place. Mr. Lampe completed both a bachelor’s degree in Modified Philosophy and a Master’s in Political Science. After graduation, Mr. Lampe worked in Mexico for their Civil Service, and spent time in Honduras for the Peace Corps in 1966-68. He then taught at Texas A&I University in Kingsville, the University of Texas at Austin, and Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, before settling in at SWTJC in the summer of 1972.

Mr. Lampe has taught mostly government classes in his time at SWTJC, and a few courses in philosophy. He said he has taught at many locations, including Pearsall, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Crystal City, but now primarily teaches out of Uvalde. He has taught some classes using the new video conferencing technology, but he said the College was not pushing the faculty to teach courses using new technology. Mr. Lampe felt most comfortable teaching traditional style courses, and now that is primarily what he does. He said some of his best students were women with children, and that he hates it when some of them must drop his classes. He tries to help them understand how College can help to change their lives. Through
all of this he said that his biggest hope as a faculty member is to help students to understand the larger world around them.

Dr. Mitchel Burchfield, the former Director of Planning/Research and new Division Chair for Developmental Education, was asked how he came to SWTJC, and why he has chosen to stay. He replied that explained that he had grown up in the area, left to attend college, returned to the area and then after a short teaching career in the public school system, had joined the staff of SWTJC. An incredibly pleasant and easy-going man, Dr. Burchfield spoke about his love of teaching and his desire to help students. “I do whatever is needed for the college and our students, wherever my talents can be best used, wherever they ask me to help, I’m happy to do it because I know how important the College is in this area. Dr. Burchfield has been a “jack of all trades” for SWTJC, serving as a faculty and administrative staff member, and as a full-time grant writer for the College, before assuming his present duties. His work as a grant-writer brought 15 grants to the College, and today grant writing is something SWTJC is actively involved with.

He has now been asked to serve as the Director of Developmental Studies, a program oriented to serving largely traditional aged students enrolling at the College immediately after high school. This has been a leadership role he has been happy to take on. “I’m not an expert by any means, but I love the teaching part of it, and I’m working hard to educate myself about developmental education.” Dr. Burchfield has been working on a developmental educational textbook and hopes to complete it soon. My interview with Dr. Burchfield was conducted during my May 2002 site visit to SWTJC; and in a later visit I learned that he did complete his developmental educational textbook, and continues to enjoy working in the Developmental Educational Department at SWTJC. While attending the July 2005 meeting of the SWTJC
Board of Trustees, it was my good fortune to be in attendance when both he and his wife were among other faculty members were granted tenure with the College.

George Garza is one of many SWTJC faculty and staff who are active in their respective communities. Mr. Garza serves as Director for Adult Basic Education (ADE), which is designed to assist older adults to obtain their GED’s. He also serves as the Mayor of Uvalde. We met in his office in the ADE building, located behind the administration building on the Uvalde campus.

Mr. Garza said it was the Revolution in Mexico that pushed his grandfather to bring his family to the United States. His father was the oldest of the 10 children; in 1928, he was put on a train to Matamoros to work in the Rio Grande Valley for the hefty sum of one dollar a day. Mr. Garza's grandfather was eventually granted amnesty in the United States, and the entire family migrated to work as sharecroppers in the Rio Grande Valley. George’s father was 13 when the family arrived, and was still working for the sharecropper three years. After his father became an ordained minister in the Assemblies of God Church, the family moved first to San Antonio in 1932, to Eagle Pass in 1938, to Houston, and then to Corpus Christi, where a young George Garza sold newspapers at the age of thirteen to servicemen stationed there. In December of 1954, the family moved back to San Antonio, arriving in Uvalde in January of 1955.

At age sixteen George worked picking cotton. He told me, “Chris, picking cotton will make a man out of you.”

“How so?” I asked.

“It will make you sure of the fact that you don’t want to spend the rest of your life picking cotton, and it will teach you the importance of getting an education,” he replied.

In 1955 George bought a car with the money he had earned from selling newspapers. He went to work for a crop duster as flagger and as a mixer of pesticides and fertilizers. The pilot was also
an accomplished mechanic and he taught George about airplanes. Together they restored an old plane. George went into the Army Reserves, and at the age of 23 headed to Texas A&I in Kingsville. In 1961, his unit was activated in response to the Berlin Crisis. In August of that year, he received an early release as the crisis ebbed, and returned to Texas A&I, graduating with degrees in History and Government in 1964.

At this point he moved and began teaching in the fourth and fifth grades in the Uvalde public schools. Mr. Garza said that upon being hired, he asked to teach "the undesirable kids," and he got them. He coached a flag football team for the school, and found that most of his kids were very small for their age, as they were undernourished. He bought vitamins and extra food, and gave them to the kids in his classes. The first year they lost all of their games. In the second year he coached, with the increased nourishment came some growth in his players, and he found some success. He said he taught the kids to use a “hurry up style of play” where they called the plays from the line of scrimmage in Spanish, and did not huddle up. They played a team from the town of Gustafson, using this “hurry up” style and won. The opposing Coach was very distraught that his team of white students had lost to “a bunch of Mexicans,” and this angry losing coach then contacted the Uvalde school board and reminded them that it was against Texas law to use any foreign languages in school. This was a gross application of that law, Mr. Garza believed, as the players from Fredericksburg used German, and the players from Flatonia spoke in Czech. It was the use of Spanish that was to be prohibited.

In 1969, Mr. Garza enrolled at Southwest Texas State University to work on his Masters degree. In 1970, he was fired from his teaching position in Uvalde by what he described as “a paranoid principal” who insisted that his desire to earn a master’s degree meant that he was
attempting to “steal his job” by taking the graduate classes. In 1974, de facto segregation of the local schools occurred, and that was a tough and painful process for everyone involved.

In 1981, now employed at SWTJC, Mr. Garza ran for the Uvalde School Board and was elected. He later ran for Mayor of Uvalde in 1996, and served a two-year term before losing re-election. He ran again and won in 2000, and has since been re-elected twice. Mr. Garza carries with him two cell phones, a personal one and a second cell phone which rang a few times during our interview as his “Mayor’s hotline.” Mr. Garza said he was not sure if he would choose to run for another term as Mayor after his current term ends in 2006.

Southwest Texas Junior College was originally founded because the town leaders in Uvalde wanted a place for their children to be able to gain access to skills and increase their education. This same philosophy of wanting to help the region to gain access to skills and higher education opportunities is still very much driving SWTJC's activities. The SWTJC faculty of today sincerely cares about their students, just like they did fifty years ago, and everyone at the College is invested in the success of all who they serve. From the high rates of success of the students who transfer, to the lives of the students that are positively changed by acquiring new skills, SWTJC has continued to maintain and encourage a student-faculty relationship that is based on mutual care and respect, and a firm belief in the attitude that anyone that wants so succeed can (with a little help from the College).
CHAPTER 8

FINANCING GROWTH:

Introduction

Financing the growth envisioned by the College's participation in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), in order to expand access and economic development opportunities across the entire region has proven to be a significant challenge. In 1994, while the College delivered services to a nine county state-assigned service area, it received taxes from but three of those counties (Real, Uvalde, and Zavala). While local taxes brought no more than 1/27th of the Colleges' total budget, it was and is illegal under Texas law to spend tax and tuition money on construction of facilities outside of a community college taxing district. This provision of Texas law severely limited the College's scope of vision and programming. It limited the College’s workforce training program, and a general lack of skill in economic development hindered the College in its attempt to provide services to the region. Not only was the College not seen as a regional player, it was viewed as the “Junior College in Uvalde.”

Participation in the RCCI helped the College overcome disparities between the services and programs it provides within its three county taxing-district, and its 1996-97 eight county state-assigned service area. The RCCI also helped the College see its way toward a more expanded role in workforce training, and a much more active role as a catalyst in regional economic development. This change occurred over time, and with considerable effort on the part of the College, and the region's leadership.
These changes taken together also marked tremendous growth in the College’s financial situation. Southwest Texas Junior College grew from an operating budget of an estimated $15 million in 1995, to $28 million in 2004, a nearly doubling of the operating budget. And this increase coincided with a long-term decline in investment by the State of Texas in the community college instructional formula (cut from 81% to 52%) and deep mid-year budget cuts of 7.5% in February of 2003. It is clear from even a cursory review that the finances have been and continue to be a struggle at Southwest Texas Junior College, despite the growth that traditionally at community colleges has "lifted all boats."

This chapter examines the changing financial situation of Southwest Texas Junior College from 1994-2004, during and immediately after its participation in the RCCI. This chapter is organized as follows: SWTJC's Financial Picture, 1994-2004; The SWTJC Foundation: Ingenuity to Serve a Region; and Financing Branch Campuses to Extend Regional Access.

SWTJC's Financial Picture, 1994-2004

In his 1994-95 site visits to the College, Katsinas discussed the issue of state funding for community colleges in Texas. Katsinas believed that the funding from the State for the college was “woefully short of needs.” He likened the region's depressed tax base to that of other economically depressed areas of the United States, where revenue from property taxes for public rural community colleges is relatively non-existent. In 1994, of SWTJC's $15 million budget, just $360,000 (2.4%) came from local property taxes. At that time, the College received more in private sector gifts than from its all of its property tax revenue combined.

Katsinas quoted college figures that documented State funding for Southwest Texas Junior College had peaked during the 1984-85 budget biennium. This was caused primarily by
the decrease in state revenue available to support all state services in recent years. SWTJC President Word told Katsinas,

“Throughout the period, it has been difficult to continue providing the kinds of educational programs and services required by our constituents. We have increased student tuition and fees, raised taxes, deferred maintenance, delayed filing faculty and staff vacancies, reduced travel allowances, and postponed equipment purchases. We are rapidly approaching the limits of our cost saving and income enhancing measures that can be implemented without impairing the quality of our education programs. Assuming continuing annual enrollment increases of seven percent (a conservative estimate) and flat funding for the next biennium, Southwest Texas Junior College will be attempting to serve 27% more students during the 1997 fiscal year with the same amount of state support we will receive for the 1995 fiscal year with the same amount of state support we will receive for the 1995 fiscal years. We are in dire need of increased state funding for enrollment growth,” (Katsinas, Site Visit Notes, pp.1, 1994).

In 1994, Katsinas found basic deficiencies in the delivery of higher education in Texas. He wrote that, “according to James L. Wattenbarger, the State of Texas never implemented what he believed to be a good comprehensive plan for community colleges developed by the late C.C. Colvert in the early 1950’s” (Katsinas, 1994, p.3).

All higher education operating funds in Texas are delivered on a biennial bases. Since the Texas Legislature only meets every other year, a college’s appropriations are determined by their even year for summer, fall, and spring semester enrollment figures. This combined number is the “benchmark” for next year’s funding. In 1994 President Word said, “It basically means that you have to eat growth for two years before the state funding formula catches up. Our
enrollment has increased by an average of eight percent over the past five years.” The combined effect of increasing enrollment and decreasing state funding has created a situation where SWTJC can offer only limited classes and services, and cannot upgrade its facilities at any of its branch campuses.

As shown in table VIII-A, “Annual Expenses, SWTJC, 1995-2000,” and from table VIII-B, “Total Expenditures, SWTJC 2003-2004,” the financial picture at Southwest Texas Junior College changed considerably from 1994-2004. From 1995 to 2000, the College's annual expenses experienced a 47% increase, rising from $14,001,721 to $20,558,199. This increase in expenditures was directly correlated to the increase in numbers of students served during that time-frame. For 2003-2004, the Colleges annual expenditures were $28,750,005, an increase of 40%, and again were directly tied back to the increase in number of students served. In 1995, instruction accounted for 34% of total expenditures, in 2000, instruction again accounted for 34% of total expenditures, and in 2004, instruction accounted for 32% of total expenditures.

The second largest category for expenditures across 1995, 2000, and 2004 was scholarships and student grants. In 1995, it was $3,026,413 and accounted for 22% of total expenditures. In 2000, it was $4,383,453 and accounted for 21% of total expenditures. In 2004, scholarships and grants was $7,112,453 and accounted for 25% of total SWTJC expenditures. Extension and Public service was $1,948,513 and accounted for 14% of total expenditures in 1995, and was $3,184,628 and 16% in 2000. Extension and Public service was $3,380,644, and accounted for 12% of total expenditures in 2004. Physical plant and Maintenance was the third largest expenditure, at $1,542,587 and accounting for 11% in 1995, $2,125,841 and 11% in 2000, and $3,024,146 and 11% in 2000.
Figure 8.

Chart IX-A
Annual Expenses
Southwest Texas Junior College, 1995-2000

Table 9  Comparison of Annual Expenses between 1995 and 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education and General:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>$4,767,208.00</td>
<td>34.05%</td>
<td>$6,887,046.00</td>
<td>33.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>$1,948,513.00</td>
<td>13.92%</td>
<td>$3,184,628.00</td>
<td>15.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support</td>
<td>$543,481.00</td>
<td>3.88%</td>
<td>$1,158,486.00</td>
<td>5.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>$762,746.00</td>
<td>5.45%</td>
<td>$918,545.00</td>
<td>4.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Support</td>
<td>$1,378,433.00</td>
<td>9.84%</td>
<td>$1,861,408.00</td>
<td>9.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation and Maintenance of Plant</td>
<td>$1,542,587.00</td>
<td>11.02%</td>
<td>$2,125,841.00</td>
<td>10.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>$32,340.00</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
<td>$38,792.00</td>
<td>0.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships and Student Grants</td>
<td>$3,026,413.00</td>
<td>21.61%</td>
<td>$4,383,453.00</td>
<td>21.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$14,001,721.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$20,558,199.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Independent Auditor's Reports 1995-2000
Table 10  Estimated Expenses and %Budget 2003-04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Expenses</th>
<th>Percent of Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension &amp; Public Serv.</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services &amp; Admissions</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Support</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Plant Maintenance</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Aid</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Enterprises</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: SWTJC Fact Book 2003-2004
The other side of the budget coin is revenue, and here too the College experienced tremendous growth. According to table VIII-C, “Revenue by Source, SWTJC, 1995-2004,” the largest contributors for 1995, 2000, and 2005 to SWTJC’s budget continued to be state appropriations, tuition and fees, and federal grants. Declining state appropriations are a fact of life for all public institutions of higher education in Texas. In 1995, state appropriations totaled $5,144,225, and accounted for 33% of total revenue. In 2000, state appropriations totaled $7,248,515, and accounted for 32% of total revenue, and by 2004, state appropriations totaled $7,821,873, and accounted for 28% of total revenue. This was a nine-year dollar-value increase of 52%.

The decrease in state appropriations as a percentage of SWTJC’s total budget has forced the College to look elsewhere to recover the lost revenue. The two areas that have seen the largest growth from 1995 to 2004 are (a) tuition and fees and (b) federal grants. In 1995, tuition and fees totaled $2,728,035, and accounted for 18% of total revenue. By 2000, tuition and fees revenue totaled $4,031,947, still accounting for 18% of total revenue. In 2004, tuition and fees totaled $5,805,121 and increased as a percentage of total revenue to 20%. Over 10 years this was an increase of 113%! With a 128% increase in tuition from 1993-2005 for students residing inside the state-assigned service delivery area but outside of the three county taxing-district, this increase is no surprise.

Federal grants totaled $4,867,450 in 1995, accounting for 31% of total revenue in 1995. In 2000, federal grants at SWTJC totaled $6,988,273, accounting for 31% of total revenue. In 2004, federal grants totaled $11,443,921, and accounted for 40% of total revenue. This was a nine year dollar increase of 135%. Again, the longer-term trends is flat or declining state dollars, which means that growth from 1995 to 2004 has been financed through either tuition and fees (128% increase) or from grants and contracts (135% increase).
Table 11

### Chart IX-C
**Revenue by Source Last 10 Fiscal Years, Southwest Texas Junior College, 1995-2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>State Appropriations</th>
<th>Tuition &amp; Fees*</th>
<th>Ad-Valorem Taxes</th>
<th>Federal Grants</th>
<th>State Grants</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5,144,225</td>
<td>2,728,035</td>
<td>366,196</td>
<td>4,867,450</td>
<td>198,767</td>
<td>2,264,960</td>
<td>15,569,633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>5,781,871</td>
<td>2,789,463</td>
<td>365,935</td>
<td>5,540,857</td>
<td>253,665</td>
<td>2,296,858</td>
<td>17,028,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>5,659,718</td>
<td>3,083,239</td>
<td>463,411</td>
<td>5,422,553</td>
<td>435,465</td>
<td>2,213,552</td>
<td>17,277,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6,275,278</td>
<td>3,303,465</td>
<td>469,389</td>
<td>6,617,367</td>
<td>526,572</td>
<td>2,673,932</td>
<td>19,866,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>6,489,680</td>
<td>3,456,249</td>
<td>489,070</td>
<td>7,242,340</td>
<td>1,438,454</td>
<td>2,976,402</td>
<td>22,092,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7,248,515</td>
<td>4,031,947</td>
<td>508,088</td>
<td>6,988,273</td>
<td>975,021</td>
<td>3,014,648</td>
<td>22,766,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7,507,773</td>
<td>4,169,670</td>
<td>520,179</td>
<td>7,119,657</td>
<td>792,174</td>
<td>2,995,959</td>
<td>23,105,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>7,921,916</td>
<td>5,377,907</td>
<td>660,203</td>
<td>9,055,381</td>
<td>1,046,158</td>
<td>824,455</td>
<td>24,886,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7,676,160</td>
<td>6,524,619</td>
<td>1,034,099</td>
<td>10,128,174</td>
<td>1,017,795</td>
<td>148,651</td>
<td>26,529,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>7,821,873</td>
<td>6,805,121</td>
<td>1,106,866</td>
<td>11,443,921</td>
<td>1,010,866</td>
<td>1,159,350</td>
<td>28,347,997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Amount not discounted

**Figure 10.** Revenue by source, 1995 and 2004.

Data Source: SWTJC Independent Auditors Report 2004
Another revenue source to which the College has turned is ad-valorem taxes. The College has held taxing rates very steady for a number of years, but declining state appropriations have caused the College to increase taxes, tuitions, and fees to offset some of the costs. In 1995 the College received $366,196 in taxes; which represented just 2% of total revenue. In 2004, after a nearly three-fold dollar increase in ad-valorem taxes from the three taxing counties, the College received $1,106,866 or 4% of total revenue from local appropriations. In current dollars, this was an increase of 202% over ten years. In Table IX-D, “Net Assessed Valuation, SWTJC, 1994-95 to 2003-04,” the increase in the total value of the property in SWTJC’s three county taxing-district of Uvalde, Real, and Zavala County grew from a net assessed value of $908,640,574 in 1994-95, to $1,211,798,045 in 2003-04, an increase of 33%.

Table VIII-E, “Property Tax Rates Assessed, SWTJC, 1994-95 – 2004-05,” the current operations raised from $.04 in 1994-95, to $.11 in 2004-05, an increase of 175%. As the College evolves from being “state funded” to “state assisted,” it has required SWTJC to seek outside avenues to increase its resource base. The money to finance access has to come from somewhere, and unfortunately the state has chosen to finance the increased costs of higher education off the backs of some of its poorest participants.
Table 12  Net Assessed Valuation Last 10 Fiscal Years, 1994 - 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Assessed Valuation</th>
<th>Less Exemptions</th>
<th>Net Assessed Valuations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>$ 908,694,800</td>
<td>$ 54,226</td>
<td>$ 908,640,574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>$ 894,157,736</td>
<td>$ 327,916</td>
<td>$ 893,829,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>$ 914,886,178</td>
<td>$ 205,282</td>
<td>$ 914,680,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>$ 969,078,876</td>
<td>$ 4,396,823</td>
<td>$ 964,682,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>$ 1,037,901,906</td>
<td>$ 2,290,690</td>
<td>$ 1,035,611,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>$ 1,106,232,844</td>
<td>$ 3,477,886</td>
<td>$ 1,102,754,958</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>$ 1,170,916,833</td>
<td>$ 293,020</td>
<td>$ 1,170,623,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>$ 1,162,367,328</td>
<td>$ 849,507</td>
<td>$ 1,161,517,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>$ 1,213,243,691</td>
<td>$ 1,445,646</td>
<td>$ 1,211,798,045</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11  Valuation - Assessed vs. Net Assessed

Data Source: SWTJC Independent Auditors Report 2004
Table 13  Property Tax Rates Assessed Last 10 Fiscal Years, 1994-2004

Chart IX-E
Property Tax Rates Assessed Last 10 Fiscal Years,
Southwest Texas Junior College, 1994-95 to 2004-05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Current Operations</th>
<th>Debt Service</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>$0.040000</td>
<td>$0.000000</td>
<td>$0.040000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>$0.041000</td>
<td>$0.000000</td>
<td>$0.041000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>$0.050000</td>
<td>$0.000000</td>
<td>$0.050000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>$0.050000</td>
<td>$0.000000</td>
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<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>$0.050000</td>
<td>$0.000000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>$0.050000</td>
<td>$0.000000</td>
<td>$0.050000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>$0.050000</td>
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<td>$0.050000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>$0.060000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>$0.090000</td>
<td>$0.000000</td>
<td>$0.090000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>$0.090000</td>
<td>$0.000000</td>
<td>$0.090000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>$0.110000</td>
<td>$0.000000</td>
<td>$0.110000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12. Property Tax Rates - Current Operations vs. Total (1994-2004).

Data Source: SWTJC Independent Auditors Report 2004
In a 1995 planning report to the RCCI, the College wrote, “The potential to leverage significant amounts of money from Federal programs, such as the Title V Grant for Hispanic Serving Institutions ($2 million), will be fully exploited by the college and the community” (unpublished SWTJC RCCI Progress Report, 2000). One of Katsinas' original hopes for SWTJC's participation in the RCCI in 1995 was the use of its “seed money” to leverage as institutional money when applying for grants. This hope has clearly turned into reality.

The College has been very successful in changing the institutional culture as it related to grant-writing. A tremendous upsurge in grants received after beginning its participation in RCCI occurred. The College used the $30,000 RCCI Planning Grant to accomplish, among other things, planning activities for $1.6 million dollars in Title III money (Bennett, 2004). In looking at Table IX- E, “Chronology of Grants Received by Southwest Texas Junior College, 1994-2001,” it is clear the College has dramatically increased grant funding.

The College also was very successful in leveraging RCCI funding to obtain other grants. From 1994 to 2002, SWTJC raised applied for and received grant funding totaling $8,435,318. The grants came from federal, state, and private funds. It is clear that SWTJC has incorporated grant-writing into its institutional culture, and that the College now has much greater internal expertise, experience, and credibility as good stewards of grant money to continue to seek and receive grants in the future.
Table 14

Chronology of Grants Received by
Southwest Texas Junior College, 1994-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grant Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Ford Foundation Rural Community College Initiative Planning Grant</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Science Foundation Internet</td>
<td>$26,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Title III Grant - Hispanic Serving Institutions</td>
<td>$1,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Ford Foundation Rural Community College Initiative Implementation Grant</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Ford Foundation Rural Community College Initiative Cont. Grant I</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>State of Texas Skills Development Grant</td>
<td>$89,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>State of Texas Skills Development Grant</td>
<td>$110,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Hispanic Serving Institutions Education Grant - “Strengthening Agricultural Management Program through Internet Integration”</td>
<td>$88,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Rural Utilities Services Distance Learning Grant</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>NASA - PreCollege Awards for Excellence in Mathematics, Science, Engineering, and Technology (PACE/MSET) Grant - Southwest Texas PACE/MSET Saturday/Summer Academy.</td>
<td>$100,000 per yr / 3 yr grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board (TIF) Two-year College Library Grant - Internet &amp; Distance Learning</td>
<td>$185,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development - Hispanic Serving Institutions Work Study Program - “SWTJC Child Development CDWSP Grant”</td>
<td>$197,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Rural Utilities Services Distance Learning Grant</td>
<td>$350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board - Discovery Grant</td>
<td>$1,056,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Rural Utilities Services Distance Learning Grant</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Ford Foundation Rural Community College Initiative Contin. Grant II</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-05</td>
<td>ENLACE (CSTEP) : W.K. Kellogg/Houston Endowment</td>
<td>$241,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-06</td>
<td>Title V HSI: Department of Education</td>
<td>$2,129,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-05</td>
<td>Trio/Student Support : Department of Education</td>
<td>$1,040,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>Infrastructure Support Program : Department of Defense</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total of Grants 1994-2001 $8,435,318.00

Data Source: SWTJC Fact Book 2000-2001
The new commitment of the College to securing grants was also demonstrated by the hiring of a full-time grant-writing specialist for the first time in SWTJC’s history. I had the opportunity to meet with SWTJC’s Institutional Advancement Coordinator & Special Populations Coordinator, Susan McCormack at the Uvalde campus. Ms. McCormack had worked at the College for 12 years, starting as an administrative assistant with the Automotive Technology Department. She moved over into her current position in 2000, and is only the second person to hold this position at the College. Grant writing was previously a shared duty among the Deans, and the rest of the SWTJC Administration, one of many additional hats senior leaders at the institution wore. Clearly, devoting financial resources so that an individual can devote full-time attention to this area has yielded great results.

Ms. McCormack discussed some of the different grants that the College had received, and about some of the new projects that had been undertaken. We talked about the SWTnet and Rural Utilities Service (RUS) grants financed by Texas Infrastructure Fund (TIF). These would last for three years before they have to be reapplied for. The SWTnet is the Internet connection between 23 local high schools and the College that provides Distance Education courses, a major initiative achieved with RCCI funding as seed capital. Ms. McCormack indicated that the College was presently concentrating on Hispanic Serving Institutions Assisting Communities (HISIAC) grant as a program "with the most bang for the buck.” She said the College was using Title V Grants for Hispanic Serving Institutions, Student Support Services grants under TRIO, and HUD grants for Diesel Technology at Eagle Pass.

Ms. McCormick did have access to a small travel budget, but said she only traveled when it was a grant the College was very interested in applying for. She maintains a mindset of going after things they think they can get. With the College’s limited resources, she does not want to “chase everything,” because when writing grants she must work in how they will institutionalize
the grant after the funding ends. Continuing the activity or sustainability is a crucial part of initiating any grant, she said, adding "They must always plan ahead for how they will keep it going." This sustainability ideal was another cornerstone of the RCCI, to help rural community and Tribal colleges that serve rural areas with high rates of persistent poverty to incorporate the seeking of alternative funding sources, including grants, into their internal college cultures.

At SWTJC, the quantitative and qualitative data obtained show that this in fact occurred.

Ms. McCormack and I spoke about the future, and she indicated she saw lots of grants for disabled students on the horizon. Earlier that same day, I had interviewed Cathy Heyen, Director of Human Resources about disabled student services at SWTJC. She said while they did not maintain an ODA Office, the College practiced a team approach with faculty, counselors, Human Resources, and the physical plant working together to serve the needs of SWTJC’s disabled students.

During my final July 2005 interview, the College was applying for Department of Education grants for migrant workers. This grant would assist enrolling migrant workers at the College, and possibly offer distance education for them to continue their education while they are on the road. This flexible approach to education was only possible because the College was able to secure its distance education technology through the RCCI. With this first stepping stone of technology capacity firmly in place, the College can now go beyond what was possible before, and combine its new resources with new grants to create a multiplying effect.

Ms. McCormick said the College was currently using grants to help students obtain a high school diploma, the High school Equivalency Program (HEP), and to offer high school graduates assistance with the College, the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP). Ms. McCormick is excited about work the College would be able to accomplish in the future. She was very confident in Dean Bennett’s ability to construct and oversee the grant writing process at
The College had come a long way from when she originally arrived on campus, by now viewing grants as an integral part of how the College accomplishes its mission and goals. The College had established itself as a viable grant recipient, and has no plans of not continuing to use grant writing as a way to open new doors for success and access to the College (Personal interview, July 19, 2004).

**SWTJC Foundation: Ingenuity to Serve a Region**

Because Eagle Pass and Del Rio fall outside of the taxing district, the College could not legally use state funds to construct permanent facilities at either location. To get around this, and to serve the needs of the citizens of Del Rio and Eagle Pass, the Board of Trustees formed the College Foundation. The same members of the SWTJC Board of Trustees also made up the membership of the SWTJC Foundation. The Foundation raised private sector funds and then purchased the land and built facilities in Eagle Pass and Del Rio. The Foundation then leases the land back to the College. The rental fees paid by the College are enough to cover the mortgages owed by the Foundation. In 1995, the Foundation had 6.5 million in land assets and approximately 1.8 million in unrestricted funds.

A major problem Katsinas identified that faced SWTJC in 1994 came from the three county taxing, board member holding counties, and their relationship with the remaining eight counties from which no board members come. Since the eight counties in the service area do not have representation on the board, they have a perceived lack of “buy in” with the College. Participation in the fundraising programs of the Foundation has provided a method by which leading citizens of non-taxing district counties can become involved intimately in the work of the College, as it broadens its mission to serve an entire region.

With that lack of a majority of the population falling below middle class, the College was in a difficult position to raise private funds. Even with this reality, Katsinas wrote, “The private
sector support for the College Foundation is truly amazing. It is difficult for us to understand the impact of John Nance Garner. As the first national ticket representative from the South since the Civil War, Vice President Garners’ gift set the stage for other leading citizens to give to the College. In fact, so long was Garner’s shadow that when he presented his gift, it made it not only politically acceptable for others to give…Garner’s well known frugality made the non-givers with money look like pikers if they DIDN’T give” (Katsinas, 1995, p.10).

Even though the College received outstanding support from the College Foundation, SWTJC itself did not have any professional fundraisers and had never engaged in a formal fundraising campaign. The College Foundation, which was the closest thing SWTJC had to a fundraising entity, was made up of the seven Board of Trustee members from the three taxing districts. Since its members came from the three taxing districts the Foundation had not been used as an economic vehicle for the eight remaining counties in the service district.

Katsinas applauded the College and the trustees for developing such an ingenious strategy to serve the citizens in the region, but lamented the lack of specialized, technical expertise that could allow the Foundation to achieve even more. Katsinas commented that this lack of access to technical expertise such as the use of lease-purchase agreements employed at large urban community college districts like Miami-Dade was emblematic of rural community colleges across the United States. He felt the College’s foundation was key in helping to reshape the educational opportunities available in the region, and that Ford Foundation funding might help it to “jump start and manage growth.”

During my May, 2002 site-visit to the College, I met with several top-level College administrators for a round-table discussion about the impact of participation in the RCCI program. One of the first items we talked about was SWTJC’s unique solution to a statewide problem: How can rural Texas community colleges provide access to areas with exploding
populations within their state-assigned service regions that are outside of their taxing-districts? SWTJC’s answer has been the use of “Foundations.”

Rodolfo R. Flores serves as both President of the Board of Trustees for Southwest Texas Junior College and the President of the Southwest Texas Junior College Foundation. I met Mr. Flores on my first trip to the College in May of 2002, and again in 2004. We met in his Law Office, just off the Uvalde downtown square. With its small and unassuming front office desk, and Mr. Flores in the only office in the back, it appears as if little has changed in many years. The rows of Black's Law Books and other legal texts, his big brown desk, and ever-present suit and tie help Mr. Flores look the part of a quintessential attorney.

Rodolfo Flores is a kind, affable person, always quick with his smile and laugh. His presence in the community and his leadership role for the College cannot be understated. He told me he has had only one opponent for the President of the Board position for the College and that was in the first race he ran. He has run unopposed in every election since. The voters could not find a more dependable public servant, because Mr. Flores holds the record with twenty-five years of perfect attendance at SWTJC Board meetings. From his position as the Special Assistant to the Governor under former Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe, to his 30 years of service as the President of the Board of Trustees for Southwest Texas Junior College, and his leadership role with the Southwest Texas Junior College Foundation, it is clear that a great deal of activity is occurring out of this Law Office, and that the College and region have a friend and champion in Rodolfo Flores.

Mr. Flores explained his role in the development of the Foundation that is used to generate building funds. In dealing with a lack of unrestricted funds to build new buildings, several board members came up with a new way to generate capital. They developed the SWTJC Foundation, Inc. The Foundation borrows money from banks with no obligation from
the College. The College in turn pays the Foundation ‘rent money’ that is in essence a mortgage payment. Mr. Flores said:

The College was paying rent anyway, why not have that money go the Foundation? It is an arrangement that has worked out well for everyone. The majority of the buildings on the Uvalde campus have been built with endowments or alternative monies. We were able to use this money to build the outreach centers in Eagle Pass and Del Rio, and our presence there has been vital to the development of those areas.

Mr. Flores spoke of the tremendous growth in the region and in the College’s branch campuses at Del Rio and Eagle Pass. With obvious pride, Mr. Flores told me SWTJC was the second highest percentage change for growth in community colleges across the State of Texas. Thanks to the SWTJC Foundation, there has been lots of construction to accommodate that growth, in particular at the branch campuses.

Mr. Flores spoke about the accomplishments of the Southwest Texas Junior College Foundation, of which his is also President. The Foundation has about $5 million dollars in endowments, and the money spent from it comes primarily from the interest generated that money. The money is used for infrastructure and repairs and any leftover money goes into scholarship funds. Mr. Flores said the only building on which bond money is still owed is Hubbard Hall, but that will be paid off in the near future as well. The mindset of the Foundation was to be conservative with their spending, but to also work on at least one major project each year. He viewed the Foundations mindset as a positive blending of conservative and progressive practice. He told me the Foundation is a private organization that it borrows the money, and then the money is loaned to the College to pay for construction. This arrangement has helped the
College provide assistance to construct facilities to extend baccalaureate degree opportunities, he said. This lease-purchase arrangement was used by the College in charging Sul Ross rent for its facilities on the SWTJC campuses, which is what is used to pay back the borrowed money. This cycle has worked out well for everyone involved, the Foundation, Southwest Texas Junior College, Sul Ross, and the cities of Eagle Pass and Del Rio. The Leadership of the Foundation is made up of the same members as the SWTJC Board of Trustees, with each member holding the same position on each board.

Mr. Flores commented on the financing the College's growth and the construction projects planned by the Foundation. He said “As long as there is growth and need, the Foundation will continue to build buildings and provide access for all of the region’s citizens.” There was no doubt as to Mr. Flores' commitment, and given his long service and standing, this speaks well for both the Board and the Foundation. When asked about the role of the State of Texas in constructing new college facilities, Mr. Flores said

Chris, the State of Texas couldn’t help even if they wanted to. They don’t have any money for repairs of the old buildings, even less for the construction of new buildings like we need. Since we are from here, we are able to do things the State of Texas could not do. We bought the land around Crystal City cheaply, because the city knows what kind of great return they are going to get from the College having a larger presence there. It is our history of success in this region that allows us to negotiate this new construction in growth in Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and Crystal City (personal interview, July 2004).
Branch Campuses: Extending Access Across the Region

Del Rio

I had the great fortune to be able to visit Del Rio’s campus with its Associate Dean of Instruction, Don Tomas. We met around 10 AM on Friday in Uvalde, and drove due west on highway 90 to Del Rio. There was not much development once we left Uvalde until Del Rio. It was rough land with an occasion entrance to a private ranch breaking up the scrub brush and cactus. We drove past a US Border Station outside of Del Rio (just like with Eagle Pass) on the highway coming out, not the side going into the city. The presence of the green and white Border Patrol vehicle markings takes some getting used to. With September 11, the border regions all over the United States have seen changes and Dean Tomas told me that this area in particular had seen an overall increase in the number of Border Patrol Agents. The College offers several different training opportunities and continuing education for the Border Patrol and they are always friendly when they see us drive up in the SWTJC vehicle. Dean Tomas recognized one agent that stopped us at the checkpoint. The border agent was a former SWTJC student. The College seems to pervade all aspects of life in the part of the US.

We ate in a little Mexican restaurant in town and then headed over toward the campus. When we were about two miles from campus we saw a fellow surveying land. Dean Tomas drove out on the newly bulldozed earth and stopped to talk with him. This fellow had bought the land directly behind the branch campus and wanted to build houses on it. It was comical to see that he had put up a dilapidated tin building with a goat tied to it for an agricultural tax exemption. The funny part was that here was this goat in a field, with new apartments going up on one side, and the College near the other side. That poor goat looked truly out of place staring at us as Dean Tomas spoke with the fellow. Dean Tomas had been trying to negotiate a price with for the ten acres directly behind the campus, but they had not yet agreed.
Dean Tomas took me for a grand tour of the campus and I took numerous pictures of the facility. After we spent about an hour walking through the SWTJC and the Sul Ross buildings (which are on SWTJC property and owned by the SWTJC Foundation) we visited an old cemetery near the campus. We drove near the Rio Grande, and through numerous colonias.

We also took a tour of one of the Colonias areas in Del Rio. When we entered into these Colonias areas, Dean Tomas driving the big white Suburban with the College’s logo on the doors, we always turned heads. I felt embarrassed to be there, like we were from another planet coming to sneak a peak at the attraction. The people living in these Colonias areas are just like anyone else with the same hopes and fears and dreams. But even if we all say they are the same, the truth is that in this forgotten and neglected part of our United States, we have created our own self-imposed concentration camps. Unemployment is as high as you can find anywhere in the US. Infectious diseases are an issue because of the lack of proper sanitation, rats, roaches and other disease spreading creatures abound with their populations unchecked, and the people living here looked hopeless. The children looked like ghost on their bicycles, little eyes already hardened by poverty, and here were two more gringos, riding around in their big truck, with their nice shirts and ties, their fancy degrees, and their pity on us. There is no doubt in my mind that Don Tomas “got it” when it came to the Colonias areas in Del Rio. The poverty here was as third-world as you can find in the United States, and I could see that he was committed on working to get the College out to provide services to these poorest of the poor in Del Rio. He had not forgotten about the colonias in Del Rio.

When asked what brought him to the region, Dean Tomas told me that he had married into the local culture. He said he enjoyed being here, that he loved the students, the people he worked with, and the way of life out here in southwest Texas. Dean Tomas had worked diligently to create the Del Rio campus and is proud of its accomplishments. He was also very
optimistic about the College’s future in the area. “You can see the growth everywhere, new construction, more and more people, and that is being reflected in our enrollment, which has increased steadily every year the center has been open.”

Through the course of his 15-year tenure at SWTJC, Dean Tomas has been at the ground floor of the development of the Del Rio campus, from 60 courses offered in the beginning, to over 200 courses being offered as of 2002. Dr. Tomas indicated that the involvement with the Ford Foundation helped get more information out and into the area about what the College could do for them. This has helped to bring the centers in Del Rio and Eagle Pass into focus. Without the help of the RCCI, Dean Tomas believes, neither campus center would be where it is at today.

Dean Tomas would be my primary guide as I toured the branch campuses during my two other site-visits to the College in 2004, and 2005. In July of 2004, Don Tomas, the Associate Dean of Instruction for Del Rio, and I left Southwest Texas Junior College Uvalde campus around 9 AM. Dean Tomas drove the white Chevy Tahoe the College provided to him to commute between campuses everyday. Part of the arrangement between the branch campuses and Uvalde is that the administrators of the branch campuses must be housed out of Uvalde, so Don drove the 140 miles roundtrip every day. When I asked him about driving the Tahoe instead of a more fuel efficient automobile, he told me that the majority of the times he is hauling equipment, books, or any number of supplies from Uvalde to Del Rio, and that necessitated a vehicle with more room. On that day we had several computers and printers to be delivered to Del Rio, and numerous boxes of books and office supplies in tow. We quickly left the cityscape of Uvalde and headed due West on US Highway 90. With the city fading behind us we talked about a range of topics. Dean Tomas has worked for the College for fifteen years, and his wife, who also works for the College, grew up in Uvalde. Dean Tomas is quite familiar with the region.
It is a fascinating drive headed west on US Highway 90, with the endless landscape rolling by, cactus and scrub brush, ranch entrances, and miles and miles of barbed wire fences. The US Border Patrol has cleared the area about 10 feet on both sides of the fences that run along side the highway. They drag a metal contraption behind trucks that spreads the dirt straight and even along the fences. Dean Tomas told me this was done so they can see footprints of people crossing over out of the “wilderness.” toward the highway. It is rough looking country, where every plant or tree has thorns on it and rattlesnakes are plentiful. My dad always remarked that “everything out here bites you” and it is difficult to imagine how people traveled out here, because it looks like you could never get a horse through the underbrush.

Dean Tomas and I drove into Del Rio, across San Felipe Springs Park. San Felipe Springs Park is a very pretty place where people of all ages enjoying the crystal clear water of the springs. We drove past Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, and watched as trainer planes flew low over the highway as they prepared to land. Dean Tomas drove me around the city so I could get a sense of things. There were many middle-class looking homes in the subdivisions near the College branch campus, and the downtown area had a great feel with its eclectic shopping centers. Numerous clothing and fabric stores dot the area. It reminded me of what many towns in Texas might have looked like fifty years ago. Dean Tomas told me the majority of those businesses cater to Mexicans who cross over from Cuidad Acunã, which has a population of roughly 70,000, to shop for higher quality goods than they can find in Mexico.

We drove around a colonias area in Del Rio. It was a surreal landscape, where the majority of the houses are in varying stages of decay. This was an area that Dean Tomas told me the College was working harder to get services out to. The College wanted to reach these people, but they are cut off from the outside world in this no-man’s land of squatter’s shacks and
cinder-block homes. We saw mostly women and small children. It is a sad state of affairs in America to have these colonias areas. These people desperately need assistance.

We ate lunch at a local mom and pop restaurant and then headed over to The Bank and Trust, Del Rio branch. I interviewed the President of the Bank, Mr. Jerry Simpton, who is very involved with SWTJC's branch campus in Del Rio. I remember laughing at a series of pictures he had in his office. There was a picture of a show goat, and also some of his children, and I laughed and complimented him on the goat picture, which while examining I could hear my wife’s voice in my head saying, “you idiot, tell him how nice his children look, not how nice the goat looks!” Mr. Simpton laughed too when I shared this with him, but it goes to show how deep the ranching and animal ties go in this part of the United States. Even the bank president is involved with animals!

We talked about the intimate relationship between the branch campus development and the SWTJC Foundation, and its role. Mr. Simpton said that Sul Ross RGC has piggybacked off SWTJC to grow. It was the SWTJC Foundation that built all the buildings and leased them back to Sul Ross. He told me that in the late 1980’s State of Texas court issue restructured funding for development of the state. Laredo received $50 million for Texas A&M International. At that time, in the late 1980’s Laredo had political and business leadership to make it happen for their city. Del Rio did not have the political and business connections, and this had put the region behind Laredo in terms of development. While they were not able to get anything close to $50 million, Sul Ross was able to receive enough funding to pay for their lease back to the Foundation

Del Rio's population has remained steady in recent years, but the size of families has continued to shrink to where now three children is a large family. This has kept the enrollment numbers for the high school relatively static over the past 20 years. The extended summer
courses now offered by the Junior College have allowed more students who come home from other colleges in the summer to continue taking classes.

Mr. Simpton continued: The Foundation originally bought three acres and now the campus is comprised of thirteen acres. All of this land has been paid for by leasing parts of it back to Sul Ross. This has allowed the Junior College to meet the needs of the citizens in its service area and get around the state mandate that money cannot be used to build structures outside of the taxing districts. It is a win-win relationship for everyone. As Dean Tomas said, “At this point we are just meeting needs of the City of Del Rio, any new growth in SWTJC operations in Del Rio will have to come from increased tuition and fees.”

Mr. Simpton said:

Now with more course offerings at Del Rio, students are able to stay enrolled locally instead of transferring right out after a few courses (see chart V-B in Chapter 5). These new changes are both welcome and inspiring, since the development of the branch campuses has taken many years. In the late 1970’s, SWTJC’s presence in Del Rio was a single storefront office. Most of the classes were taught at night in local high schools. The professors did everything back then, from taking money for payments, to registration, to bringing books from the library in Uvalde, everything. In 1978 SWTJC built the first administration buildings for SWTJC in Del Rio. They brought portable buildings to the campus in 1989 as a temporary fix and are still using them today. The portables are very expensive to heat and cool and to maintain, but now Del Rio’s enrollment is such that they cannot forgo the space. In 1994 the first Sul Ross buildings were built by the Foundation. Now the College has an extensive physical plant in Del Rio, both for SWTJC and for the Sul Ross buildings that are leased from the College.
Mr. Simpton said that community leaders saw the need for college development in Del Rio, and worked with architects, speakers committees, social clubs and even the local rodeo club to raise money and awareness regarding the needs of the College. The National Bank where he was previously employed contributed $25,000, the community foundation put in another $25,000, and the President of Bank and Trust where he now works put in $75,000, all to get the Del Rio physical plant built.

After speaking with Mr. Simpton, Don and I talked with Sid Cauthorn of the Bank and Trust. Sid’s father was the person who gave the $75,000 to the college. He was a nice gentleman who obviously cared a great deal about the Del Rio branch of SWTJC. Dean Tomas and I left the bank and went back to the College and toured the Sul Ross portion of the campus. It was a brand new, from the paint on the walls to the newly planted palm trees out front. The classrooms looked very nice, with lots of new computers and some with distance learning technology.

Eagle Pass

The Dean of Instruction at Southwest Texas Junior College, Hector Gonzales, needed to travel over to the Eagle Pass branch campus on my second day in July of 2004, and was kind enough to offer me the opportunity to go there with him. We left Uvalde around 11 AM in our SWTJC minivan, and headed southwest to Eagle Pass. It was my first visit to Eagle Pass, and I was excited to finally see the new construction of which so much had been heard. It is approximately 75 miles south from Uvalde to Eagle Pass, plenty of time for good conversation about the College and its service region.

When we arrived in Eagle Pass, Dean Gonzales drove me through the city, and we took some back roads to a little Mexican restaurant. From the mishmash of cinderblock buildings to the overgrown lots and planted flowers, it was a scene to me very reminiscent of my time in
Costa Rica. Although we were on the American side, we could have just as easily been in Mexico. We ordered our food in Spanish, and as I listened to peoples’ conversations around us, it was a mixture of both English and Spanish.

We headed over to the Eagle Pass campus and the construction projects in progress, and met with the Associate Dean of Instruction, Gilbert Bermea, who directs of the campus and he reports to the Dean of Instruction. A quick tour of the campus was provided, and then we went outside to speak with the construction manager. The construction was coming along as planned. In May of 2005, on a return visit to Eagle Pass I took pictures of the completed new construction, some of which are in Appendix C that follows. The growth at that facility was truly amazing! The Campus' enrollment numbers have shot up from nearly nothing in the early 1990s to the few hundred by the middle of that decade to nearly 1,000 today.

Campus activities were slow during my visit, because Summer II registration has been taking place over the phone and there was not much walk-in traffic. While waiting in the hallway outside of Mr. Bermea’s office while he and Hector met it was easy to notice that everyone in hallway was speaking Spanish to each other. There were two young children, around four and six years old loudly playing in the hallway, running up and down, chasing each other, etc. No one noticed for about ten minutes. Just as the mom finished her conversation and grabbed her children to go did a fellow pock his head out into the hallway to see what was going on. People here were much more accustomed to moms with small children and to children in general being on campus. It is an environment where moms and children are encouraged to come onto campus.

During a later visit to Eagle Pass, I met the Associate Dean of Instruction, Gilbert Bermea, around 9:30 AM at the President’s Office in Uvalde. Dean Bermea checked in with the Uvalde staff, and picked up the mail and other items he was to deliver to Eagle Pass. This was
his usual routine, checking in at the Administrative Building in Uvalde, and then making the drive over to Eagle Pass.

Dean Bermea told me his story about how he became involved with the College. He grew up in Crystal City, served in the Armed Forces, and after his service completed his bachelor’s degree at Texas A&I in Kingsville in 1964. Dean Bermea is an institution at SWTJC and in fact has a building named after him on the Eagle Pass campus. Always a kind and unassuming gentleman, Dean Bermea has lived a life of service and commitment to helping his fellow citizens. When we arrived on campus, I left Mr. B, as Dean Bermea is affectionately referred to, and took some pictures of the construction on campus. I read through some different planning reports in Mr. B’s office, 2004 budgets, etc. I ate lunch with Mr. B in break room of the College and then we took off for Crystal City. I laughed as Mr. B and I sat in the break room eating cold tacos, pointing out to him the “Mr. B’s Corner” that was taped on the wall behind us. He is a well respected and cared for individual here in Southwest Texas. My own site notes from my visit to Eagle Pass recorded the following:

Crystal City

*My God the need here is as great as anywhere. At least the border cities have Mexico; Crystal City has nothing* (Thomas, July 2004, Site Visit Notes).

The Associate Dean of Instruction, Gilbert Bermea, took the back roads to Crystal City. Since Dean Bermea grew up in Crystal City he was quite familiar with the area. We drove into Crystal City, past the giant statue of Popeye, and the sign proclaiming Crystal City as the ‘Spinach capital of the world.’ This once vibrantly painted statue is now showing its age, and so is the city. In truth I saw Crystal City as a sad and dying place. I had heard numerous rumors about Crystal City as this “bad place,” as an unsafe area. Many of the people I spoke with in Uvalde reported that they had not traveled to Crystal City in many, many years. The La Raza...
Unida movement that started here in the sixties and seventies, in the end, had the opposite effect it had desired. While the Hispanics have control of the city, there is nothing left worth controlling. With the continual decline of the Del Monte packaging plant and no new industry coming into the city, there is little hope for the citizens of this area. The College presence in this city is one of the only bright spots in Crystal City’s horizon. Now that the College has expanded its buildings in Crystal City, the citizens finally have some good things happening in an area that seems to have known more that its fair share of heartache.

We drove down the main thoroughfare of Crystal City, passed numerous abandoned buildings and closed-down mom-and-pop restaurants. The Dollar General Store had its outside merchandise behind giant bars, and that set the tone for the rest of the city. We continued on into the heart of the city, past more boarded-up business, and dilapidated houses. When we arrived at the branch of SWTJC, it itself was in a row of businesses that looked like they had passed their prime about twenty years ago. Most of the business fronts were closed down, a few struggled to keep the doors open with empty shops as neighbors. Graffiti was the only sign of fresh paint.

Dean Bermea introduced me to Cruz Mata Jr, the Office Manager for the Crystal City branch of Southwest Texas Junior College. Cruz Mata was very excited about us visiting him, and was very pleasant as he showed us around the Crystal City Campus. At that time the College branch in Crystal City was built primarily off a main hallway with classrooms coming off both sides. A number of classrooms were equipped with computers, and distance education equipment. Cruz took us outside and showed us the building on the corner that the College was going to tear down and rebuild as an extension of the campus. Cruz told me he had just finished his bachelors degree and was planning on earning his masters in counseling and becoming a licensed professional counselor (LPC). Cruz said he wanted to stay in Crystal City and help the citizens there. I told him that the need there was as great as anywhere in the US, and that his
help would of tremendous service to the citizens of Crystal City. Even in the darkest of places, the light shines on good people who want to help.

When I returned to Crystal City with Dean Tomas in May of 2005, I was unfortunately not able to visit again with Mr. Mata, but I was able to see the new construction that he had spoken about. The old building on the corner had been partially torn down. There were several men busy with construction on the building that will become the center of this city’s chance for a better life. Dean Tomas and I walked over and into the new buildings. Freddy, the College’s Construction Manager and Electrician showed us around and explained how the facility would be laid out. It was very inspiring to see the new construction in Crystal City. This new facility will be a beacon for the community, just as the branch campuses in Eagle Pass and Del Rio have become beacons for their communities. Dean Bermea told me the Eagle Pass buildings do not suffer graffiti problems of the neighboring buildings. I hope that this Crystal City branch will enjoy the same kind of respect from the citizens it seeks to serve. This is a direct demonstration of the College moving beyond Uvalde to help deliver services to the region’s citizens.

It was clear from my visits to the branch campuses that they were continuing to grow and evolve as educational entities. To see the construction equipment in action, watch as the land around the campuses continued to developed, and to hear the excitement in the voices of the SWTJC administration, it was easy to believe that something great was occurring. While SWTJC has had its reach in the eleven county state-assigned service delivery area for some time, the growth of the branch campuses and their respective cities has pushed those distant areas and their citizens into the forefront of the College’s psyche. As the main campus in Uvalde continues to hold steady in growth, while the branch campuses increase, the relationship between the College and its branches must continually be assessed to ensure that all parties are best served.
CHAPTER 9

TRANSFORMATION ON THE BORDER

In 1993, before its participation in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) served only 3,026 students, of whom three fourths attended at its main campus in Uvalde. Coinciding with the onset of its participation in RCCI, the college ran branch campuses in Del Rio and Eagle Pass, which in 1993 served 729, and 623 students respectively. The institutional budget was about $15 million, and this predominantly transfer-oriented junior college was known as “Uvalde’s College for Uvalde” (Katsinas, 1994, 1995).

In 1995, the Texas Legislature enacted legislation that assigned each of the state’s 254 counties to a taxing district in one of the state’s 50 existing community college service areas. A deficiency in this legislation was its failure to create region-wide taxing districts; thus SWTJC’s 3-county service taxing district was expanded by eight counties, to cover the entire Middle Rio Grande Valley. This is a vast area, larger than the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut combined, with a total population in 1990 of 212,783 (Katsinas, Alexander, & Opp, 2003). With this new configuration, 70% of the population lives outside of the original taxing district, which practically means that none of SWTJC’s seven elected trustees can come from that 70%.

Southwest Texas Junior College serves the poorest region in the State of Texas, and one of the poorest in the United States. The median family income in 1994 was $11,550, well below the state average of $21,992; for the region's large Hispanic population, median family income
was just $9,237. In 1994, the median level of education completed by those 25 years or older was 9.6 years in comparison to 11.6 for the state as a whole. The median years of school completed by those of Hispanic origin, 25 years or older, was 6.4 years compared to the state wide median of 8.8. These numbers are reflected in a statement made by Katsinas in 1994, “Within its service area, only 9.6% of adults 25 years of age and over possess baccalaureate degrees, compared to a statewide average of 11.6%. It was even worse for the Hispanic population, whose percentages are lower at 6.4%.” Katsinas, citing College officials, found about 35% of the students attending SWTJC in 1994 had at least one parent who never attended high school (Katsinas, 1994, p.2).

Further, the College served a region whose leaders did not often think of themselves as a region. In fact, it could be said of the history of the region that some of its communities were broken. Cotulla, Texas, provided future US President Lyndon B. Johnson his first teaching job, and for the rest of his life he reminded audiences of the poor and impoverished Mexican-American students he taught there (Caro, 1982). Crystal City, a town of less than ten thousand, was the site of some of the most strained Hispanic-Anglo racial strife in the American Southwest. In 1970, then-Senator Walter F. Mondale, a future Vice President of the United States, chaired hearings in Uvalde to shed light on the area’s discriminatory educational practices found in area high schools, and brought attention to desegregation in the South (Navarro, 1998).

It was against the backdrop of this history of ignoring the region’s challenges by the state’s government, legal structures that did not work well, and discriminatory practices that Southwest Texas Junior College struggled on a daily basis. In the author’s opinion, had the Rural Community College Initiative come in the early 1980s, so soon after the racial strife of the 1960s and early 1970s, it might not have been possible for regional teambuilding, a key process
requirement of RCCI, to have taken root. A quarter century had to pass following that strife before the timing would be right, a point indirectly acknowledged by then-SWTJC President Billy Word, who said, “the College is now uniquely situated to endure a quantum leap in its abilities to provide services to the region.”

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the core question that provided the impetus for this study: Did the participation by Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) in the Ford Foundation’s Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) aid in its institutional transformation, and if so, how? This chapter provides an analysis of the product and process that resulted from Southwest Texas Junior College’s participation in the Rural Community College Initiative. The assessment is presented in two parts; the first part looks at the RCCI, its process, and SWTJC pre-RCCI, while the second part references key points from each chapter of this study.

Part 1

In the late 1980’s, Ford Foundation President Susan Beffersford, the late George Autry, President of MDC, Inc., Betsy Campbell and Walt Coward of the Ford Foundation’s Rural Poverty and Resources Division, and Steven Zwerling of its Education and Culture Division started exploring the possibility of using rural community colleges as “agents of change” (Eller et al., 2003). The Foundation commissioned the Community Colleges of Appalachia (CCA), an organization whose members’ institutions’ service delivery areas coincided with counties served by the Appalachian Resource Commission (ARC), to perform the initial study. The fiscal agent for CCA was West Virginia University-Parkersburg, whose President Eldon Miller served as president of both organizations. Miller would employ Robert S. Pederson and Stephen G. Katsinas to write the study’s quantitative and qualitative components, respectively. The quantitative portion of what came to be known as the Parkersburg study, citing ARC analysis,
found 319 counties classified as “severely distressed” as measured by low per capita income and high rates of poverty and unemployment. Ninety rural-serving community and Tribal colleges served these counties of the forgotten Americans in five regions of the nation: Appalachia, the Lower Mississippi Delta, the Mexican border region, the Four Corners region of the Southwest, and the High Plains region of Montana and the Dakotas served by geographically isolated Tribal Colleges created under the auspices of the Tribally Controlled Community Colleges Act of 1977. The study found that these institutions were predominantly transfer-oriented.

The qualitative portion of the Parkersburg Study was based upon extensive site visits by Katsinas to nine institutions in nine states. Katsinas’ site visits each produced roughly 30-40 pages of double-spaced highly detailed notes on issues that included students, faculty, curriculum, finances, the administration, economic development, local business and industry leaders, and high school counselors, principals, and superintendents. These colleges all struggled with limited financial resources coupled with geographic isolation that made professional development “a luxury few could afford,” and they all faced difficulty in developing full curriculums that would allow them to serve the needs of their regions (Katsinas, 1994, 1995). Katsinas found these institutions were largely outside of the policy-making discussions in their respective state governments, and the federal government. In short, they were, poor, limited, and lacking in all manners of resources.

Drawing upon the Parkersburg study and their own extensive experience with rural development policies and higher education, MDC, Inc, was hired by the Ford Foundation to manage and develop its Rural Community College Initiative. Two key ideas were linked together: the improvement of human capital, and the use of rural community and Tribal colleges
as catalysts for positive economic change. The Ford Foundation’s multi-million dollar commitment to funding what became the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) resulted.

From the perspective of the Ford Foundation, its Rural Community College Initiative came from the Foundation’s desire to alleviate persistent rural poverty. Its Rural Poverty and Resources Division had been involved with poverty-fighting programs for many years. In addition, its Education and Culture Divisions had a long history of involvement with community colleges, and particularly urban community colleges, to foster access and opportunity, especially for historically under-represented minority groups and women. The RCCI was a natural marriage of these two divisions, according to L. Steven Zwerling of the Education and Culture Division (Ford Foundation, 1996). The RCCI represented the first time that these two major divisions of the Ford Foundation had ever worked together in a major program. The twin goals of promoting expanded access and economic development led Foundation officials to exploring the possibility of using rural community colleges as “agents of change” (Eller, et. al., 2003).

The services of MDC, Inc, were secured by the Foundation to manage and lead the Initiative. MDC Inc, a non-profit organization located in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with decades of service in working with mostly southern states to develop policies and programs designed to ameliorate poverty and expand opportunity and hope. MDC (1986, 2002) used the “The Cycle of Development” model developed by its President, George Autry, and its Vision to Action process model described below, to assist the rural community and Tribal Colleges from these five high poverty regions to develop the internal capacity to allow Foundation-funded grant programming to take root and succeed in its goal of institutional capacity building and transformation. It was hoped that community and tribal colleges in these regions could increase access to educational opportunities, and become centers for regional economic development. It
was believed by both Ford and MDC that by using these region’s colleges as agents of change, the regions themselves could start to turn around their tide of despair, and begin to be able to become their own greatest allies, instead of continuing to rely on outside assistance.

Nine rural community and Tribal Colleges were chosen in 1994-95 by Ford Foundation and MDC to serve as the pilot colleges of RCCI and to begin participation in RCCI. All were physically located in the five persistently distressed regions of the United States; all were limited in their abilities to extend access to their service areas, and none were regional players in economic development. They all did possess leadership that was open to change, and displayed a strong desire and belief in the power behind increased access and service of the college as a regional hub for economic development. Each also made a commitment to develop regional leadership teams that were inclusive of the key groups from their areas. MDC via Ford provided a myriad of assistance to these colleges, including participation at RCCI institutions, which were held on rural community college campuses, and technical assistance that included “coaches” assigned to each college.

In the first phase of the project, nine pilot RCCI colleges were identified. Each was charged with undertaking a process pioneered by MDC called Vision to Action. In the Vision to Action Toolkit created by MDC for both of its pilot RCCI colleges and regional teams, a philosophical approach was offered as a means to “see where you are, and where you would like to go.” This simple and straightforward approach asked the participants to take an honest look at their current situation and to dream about what could be changed for the better. The Vision to Action process incorporated a series of nine steps that were cyclical in nature

The nine steps of Vision to Action started with “Data Collection and Analysis.” In stage one of Data Collection and Analysis a team was called upon to collect and process raw data on
their area, so they could be sure of the realities of their region. After areas for improvement have been identified, the team was then charged with analysis of the data so the central question of “where are we” could be answered (MDC, 1996).

The second step in Vision to Action was to “Describe the Current Situation.” The central point here was to answer the question of “Where are we now?” This helped to build up, and clarify the team’s idea as to their current situation, including extent strengths and assets.

The third step was “Visioning.” The key point of this stage was to answer the question of “Where would we like to be?” Together the team created a vision statement of what they would like their community to resemble in the future. The vision statement was meant to be a picture of what “could be” in the future if things that were valued were given merit.

The fourth step was to “Set Goals.” The central point of this stage was to answer the question of “What outcomes must be achieved to make our vision a reality?” Goals were used to take the more ephemeral ideals from the vision statement and transform them into concrete and measurable actions.

The fifth step was to “Develop Strategies.” The central point of this stage was to answer the question of “How do we make our goals achievable?” The strategies had to be all inclusive in their approach, explaining what was required to bring the goals to fruition including resources such as money, time commitments, materials, office space, etc.

The sixth step in Vision to Action was to “Analyze Stakeholders Influence.” Here stakeholders were “individuals, groups of people, or organizations with a direct stake in the outcomes you are seeking—both goals and strategies (MDC, 1998, p. 46). This would help the group to better prepare for actions and reactions that would happen in the future.
The seventh step was to “Plan for Funding and Sustainability.” The central question of this stage was, “What is our cost for the strategies and who will pay for them, both in the short and long term?” The funding from RCCI was only meant to be used for a short period of time, and as leverage for alternative funding for the eight years of the initiative. The team was encouraged to look both at a short term, two-year plan, and much longer term sustainability plans in order to better ensure the prospect of continual success.

The eighth step was to “Plan for Action.” The central question at this stage was “Who will do what and when?” This stage was where the planning merges with reality and the team decides what programs would be created and how that process would happen. The basics of what, who, when, and how were incorporated together to create the plan that the team would follow.

The final step in Vision to Action was step nine, “Plan an Evaluation.” The central question of this stage was “how will we know when we have achieved our goals?” The plan must have included benchmarks that could be used to demonstrate the success of implementations to constituents by backing up claims with facts. The evaluation process was cyclical in nature and was truly never-ending. Anytime a new program was created, an evaluation plan was required, so that its value could be both determined and shared objectively with others.

The Southwest Texas Junior College staff involved in the Vision to Action process reported back to the Ford Foundation in their Three Year Continuation Grant (1997) that Vision to Action was an exciting process and one of the most beneficial planning activities in which the College had ever participated.
In 1994, when as part of his Parkersburg study work, Katsinas first visited Southwest Texas Junior College; he found a college known in Uvalde for academic transfer. The College was only marginally delivering services to its vast state-assigned service area as evidenced by the fact that non-credit education accounted for approximately 20,000 credits out of approximately 400,000 generated in 1994. The College lacked both key specialized personnel and appropriate professional development opportunities to “grow their own.” Only limited access existed at SWTJC’s branch campuses in Del Rio and Eagle Pass; Uvalde enrollment in 1993 was 1,712, Del Rio and Eagle Pass were 729 and 623 respectively. The College had no real involvement with work-force training, and had little if any knowledge about economic development. The College was also not seen as a regional player at any level in access, workforce training, or economic development. In 1994 the College was struggling to serve the people, the business, and in turn the region (Katsinas, 1994).

Research Questions from Chapter 1

1) Did participation in the Rural Community College Initiative change Southwest Texas Junior College?

The answer here is clearly yes. Participation in RCCI significantly changed Southwest Texas Junior College. From professional development and technology training, to providing additional full-time staff including a grant writer, institutional research, workforce development coordinator, and a public relations officer, to the credibility from being associated with the Ford Foundation, participation did have a tremendous impact on the College. New professional staff were added who significantly deepened and broadened the internal capacity of SWTJC to innovate programmatically. It is doubtful to the author that so much could have been achieved without the new staff that were brought on board. A key reason for this given the fact that RCCI
program grants never exceeded $150,000 per year was that, in the words of former SWTJC President Billy Word, these were “unrestricted funds.” Rural community colleges often lack the economies of scale needed to internally generate seed capital for innovative new programs and services. By funding specialized staff, RCCI helped the College to impact its access-oriented programming and its economic development function. The result was a dramatic increase in access and a reshaping of the College’s perception in the community; over time SWTJC came to be seen as a hub for regional leadership and economic development in southwest Texas.

2) How did participation in RCCI impact the College’s organization, administration, and finances?

RCCI participation helped the College to more fully fulfill its mission as a comprehensive community college for the region. The Colleges’ organization and administration have grown significantly over the course of its RCCI participation, making it possible to add much needed new staff and faculty positions. SWTJC’s full-time staff grew by 88% between 94 and 2004, and full-time faculty increased 46%. The financial picture of the College dramatically improved with the College operating budget almost doubling from $15 million in 1994, to $28 million in 2004. The College has incorporated grant writing as a part of its operating philosophy and culture and has been able to increase its perception as a strong steward of federal and state grants. In 1995, grants accounted for $5,066,217 or 33% of the College's $15,569,633 million budget; by 2004, grant-funded activities brought $12,454,787 to the College, or 44% of the College's $28,347,997 million budget. This was not the case before RCCI.
3) How did participation in RCCI change how the faculty approach what they do?

The number of faculty has almost doubled since 1994, and the number of Hispanic faculty has continued to increase as well. The expansion of the College physical plants in Del Rio and Eagle Pass allowed for an extensive expansion of the curriculum at those branch campuses. Because of RCCI participation, the College now has sophisticated distance learning educational equipment, from web-based instruction to video conferencing equipment, and this has allowed for an expansion of the Colleges’ service delivery area. The College has dramatically increased its workforce training activity and this has allowed the College and its faculty to become much more involved and serve the needs of the local business community.

4) In what ways did participation in RCCI change students and student services at SWTJC?

Because of RCCI, the College was able to jumpstart its physical plant expansions in Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and Crystal City. These campuses have almost doubled in the amount of students served since 1994, and many of the students from those cities can now do everything from enrolling and paying for classes to working with academic counseling and financial aid, to student activities at each of the branch campuses. Because of the tremendous expansion, the branch campuses now have their own identities, separate from Uvalde, and are perceived as being peers, and no longer as second-class. All of the campuses experienced an explosion in technological advances from on-line computer services, and each campus having its own webpage. The students today are better served, with more services, in their region, than at any time in the College’s history.

5) How did participation in RCCI impact SWTJC’s efforts in delivering extending access and economic development?
The College’s growth in its branch campuses of Eagle Pass and Del Rio, speak to the “pent-up need” Katsinas described in 1994. The College experienced a 64% increase in enrollment from 1994 to 2004. Once the College was able to extend its services, the students lined up out the door, and the College has continued to increase enrollments each semester. With this increase in enrollment the College awarded 589 degrees and certificates in 2003-04, a new institutional record.

In terms of economic development, the College went from being a regional non-player, to being the regional hub for economic development activity. During the course of the College’s eight year participation in RCCI, 1994-2002, the College has secured several large grants for economic development, from Housing and Urban Development, to Futuro, to Lumina, to numerous other federal and state grants totaling more than eight million dollars (Burchfield, 2001). In 2002 the Colleges service area map matched the area Council of Governments, and the Middle Rio Grande Workforce Development Board. The College leadership hold several prominent positions on the local development boards, Council of Governments, and have increased there presence in the region considerably. It is clear that in the economic development arena, the process skills that SWTJC officials learned about how to be active in the arena have produced benefits that have lasted long after Ford Foundation money ran out.

6) Which SWTJC activities that the Rural Community College Initiative financially supported were sustained after participation in RCCI Phase One ended?

The two cornerstones of RCCI, access and regional economic development have continued to grow at SWTJC. The physical plant and technology expansions that came from RCCI involvement have increased access in the region, and students continue to pour into the College. The connection of twenty-two area high schools with the College to form the
Southwest Texas Net or SWTnet, has created a web between the schools and the College in delivery of dual credit courses, and distance education. With technology and out of district fees firmly in place, the College has been able to maintain the momentum generated from RCCI after the grand funding ended. Where before the College was left out of planning, now the College’s place as the regional hub for economic development is firmly implanted into the regional leaderships’ mindset, and today SWTJC is always represented at the economic development table. In fact, much of that table appears to be based at or near Southwest Texas Junior College. What was once Uvalde’s junior College is now the region’s comprehensive community college.

Part 2

What happened to SWTJC from the beginning of its involvement with RCCI? A number of things have changed at SWTJC since its involvement with the RCCI, namely going from being a transfer orientated junior college in Uvalde, to being a regional comprehensive community college that provides access and economic development to its eleven county service region. The involvement with Ford Foundation assisted the college both internally and externally. Internal benefits included professional development, travel opportunities for a large team of administrators and community leaders, and the Ford Foundation provided seed money for new projects that led to further extension of programs and services.

External benefits included increased partnerships with regional education institutions and area businesses and industries, dramatically increased SWTJC’s profiles at the state level for both workforce training and higher education and RCCI participation increased the college’s profile and increased their ability to successfully compete for State and Federal grants. Participation in RCCI helped to develop branch campuses in undeserved areas in Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and Crystal City. The College through the RCCI was able to develop an extensive distance
learning program at all of its campuses. In sum, participation with the RCCI increased the institutions capacity to promote access and economic development in one of the poorest areas in the United States (Katsinas AACC Power Point Presentation, 2004).

In a 2000 unpublished report from the College to RCCI, SWTJC described what they felt were their three most significant accomplishments since beginning the RCCI process in 1995. The three activities the College was most proud of were: (a) adoption of a pro-active stance by institution to act as a catalyst for economic development and planning in the region, (b) development of a regional distance learning system to increase educational access, and (c) development of a business and industry education/training program. The College has made considerable progress in each of these areas and has incorporated each of these activities into the College culture (Bennett, 2000, pp.7-8). The essence of regional collaboration for collective success is clearly demonstrated in the region’s successful application to become an Enterprising Zone. The regionalism that had plagued this area in the past has been overcome in this accomplishment.

The membership of SWTJC on the Middle Rio Grande Development Board (COG), and the on the Middle Rio Grande Texas Workforce Board, has provided a way to widen the collaboration of the region. The region showed its first signs of mature collaboration when it applied for designation as an “Enterprise Zone” in the fall of 1998 (The FUTURO Proposal). The region was one of twenty nationally to be designated an “Enterprise Community” and will receive $250,000 a year over the next ten years from 1999 to 2009, bringing a total of $2.5 million for economic development. The Enterprise Community (EC) designation was the only one awarded in the State of Texas 1999 and makes the region eligible for “set aside” funding via United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and
the Department of Education (DOE). The community really pulled together for this effort and put aside petty differences. In fact some would say they overcame major personal, cultural, social, and institutional barriers to make it happen (Bennett, 2000, pg. 9).

The question is, “How different would things be had the College not participated in the Rural Community College Initiative?” While this hypothetical question is impossible to answer fully it does leave some areas for thought and interpretation.

I posed this exact question to President of the College, Ismael Sosa, upon my third and final trip to SWTJC in May of 2005. President Sosa is uniquely situated to best answer this question, not only because of his role as President, a position he took over during the middle of the RCCI timeframe. President Sosa has had extensive work at other rural community colleges, and is past President of the Rural Community College Alliance (RCCA). President Sosa also has been employed at the College since 1968, and if anyone can armchair theorize about “what could have been” it is someone originally from the area with an almost forty-year legacy with the College. When asked if the College would still be where it is today without being involved with the RCCI, President Sosa answered thoughtfully, emphatically, and without hesitation “No.”

President Sosa sincerely believes it was the RCCI that helped the College bridge the gap beyond the twentieth into the twenty-first century of higher education. I then asked, “But President Sosa, you would have had growth from the border cities regardless of the RCCI, and wouldn’t that growth have moved the College forward?”

He replied,

Chris, it was the RCCI that helped to focus us on what we were missing and, on who we were NOT talking too. The RCCI and Ford helped all of us at the College and in the region to see what we could gain by working together, instead
of each of us hammering out our own little parts. It was our participation in the RCCI that helped this region to begin to see the College as the hub for activity, and the credibility we gained by working with the Ford Foundation cannot be understated. That credibility was the mark of approval from Ford, a seal of acceptance and trust, where people here said, ‘if you are working with them then you must be doing something right’” (personal communication, May 17, 2005).

Seed money from Ford, via RCCI, and the newfound sense of credibility have gone a long way toward transforming this institution. Where in 1994 the College was only minimally involved in actively seeking out grants and alternative funding, grant writing is now a deeply ingrained and natural process of the College. In 1995, the College received $3,026,413 in grants, in 2004, that number had increased 135% to $11,443,921. Blaine Bennett, the Dean of Institutional Advancement and Technology, a position that was added in the late 1990’s in direct response to participation in the RCCI, told me during an interview in May of 2005,

Chris, my staff and I write all these grants and I tell you what, I’m getting tired of writing all these sob stories about how we are the most destitute and ignorant people on the planet. I am tired of saying our citizens here are the most troubled people in the United States, that they are too stupid to find work so we have to beg for outside money and assistance. These people here Chris, they are not stupid, they are not ignorant or lazy, they are Americans like everyone else with all the good and bad that entails. I want to start writing grants to talk about how exciting things are here, how exciting the growth in the Eagle Pass and Del Rio is, how much the College has grown in its service to the region and how much more we could do with the right help.” He wants to write grants that talk about
the good things happening here, not just another sad tale on why you should help
the College out (Personal communication, 2005).

By judging the College on its own history and more importantly its more recent history of
the past fifteen years, one could argue that Southwest Texas Junior College has been changed so
much, that it would be impossible for the College to revert back to its previous state. The outside
forces of decreasing state appropriations however, will only continue to push the College to seek
outside funding sources from State and Federal Grants. The reality of the College looking
externally to help make up some of the lost state appropriations money, and the high rates of
population growth at its border city branch campuses work against the idea that the College
would go back to being more “Uvalde minded” then “regionally minded.” Since 1994 the
College has readjusted itself and incorporates grant seeking and regional development as newly
emerging cornerstones of its philosophy. The College has added new staff positions such as a
full time grant writer, an institutional effectiveness officer, a workforce training and development
director, and a public relations officer, all of which add to the success of this purpose and goal.

All of the branch campuses have seen tremendous investments in physical plant facilities
to accommodate the surging need of their service areas. Students are continuing to enroll in
record numbers, and population projections in the region all point to future growth. The
expanded curriculum and growing population in the area coupled, with the multimillion dollar
investment in the physical plant at the branch campuses only makes the case stronger for
sustainability of the changes the College has made with RCCI. The RCCI process has at SWTJC
served to make these changes of how the College views itself and its role in the region, and at its
core, how the College conducts business.
Rodolfo Flores, President of SWTJC’s Board of Trustees, agreed with Dean Bennett, about the shifting role of SWTJC thanks to RCCI. Mr. Flores felt the College’s role in the Middle Rio Grande region goes beyond the traditional transfer function; the remedial and the workforce training aspects of the College are also incredibly important in serving the needs of the communities. He said the College has a proud history of training students in any number of professions, from auto body repair, to refrigeration, to aviation, to law enforcement, to cosmetology and early child care. No matter what kind of training, the College is working to help its citizens, he said. Mr. Flores was very proud to note that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board conducted a study of retention rates in community colleges across the state, and found SWTJC to be number one in retention by percentage of students retained. With this success in mind he said,

The College is doing a great job and we will continue to grow. Education is crucial for prosperity and access has been denied to those areas until we arrived. The RCCI helped us to gain the credibility we needed to become involved with Eagle Pass and Del Rio. We have done exceptionally well with the resources available to us. When we worked with the Ford Foundation, they met their end of the deal, and so did we. Our perception with the public about the Board and the College is good. They sometimes get mad at us, but they have never said we were not doing our jobs. We have been proper stewards of the College because we love it and this area. We have seen the impact SWTJC has made for our people and our involvement with the RCCI project could not have come at a better time. We have made great strides in improving, but we know we still have a long way to go.
The issues raised in this study did not end with RCCI. Indeed for each one that is resolved, new ones will come to take their place. The College has shown its growth and transformation from 1994 to 2005 by being open and willing to change to better serve its students and the region. The College has been successful in not only changing themselves, but in demonstrating change in this area of the United States. For all of the positive things happening here, the enormous challenges that remain must not be forgotten. The work here is not over, poverty is still rampant, unemployment has continued to remain high, and the region has far too many area students dropping out of school. All of these issues have yet to be resolved. The College has shown though, that it is able to adapt and incorporate change for success and it continues to shine as a beacon of hope for this southwest part of Texas.
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