

ABSTRACT

Removing Barriers for High Need Students

Modesto Junior College (MJC), one of the oldest community colleges in the state, is a long-standing Hispanic Serving Institution in Modesto, in the Central Valley of California, a region with severe economic depression. The college serves more than 17,500 students between two campuses (East and West Campuses). Forty-four percent of MJC's students are Hispanic. More than half the students at the college qualify for federal financial aid, and most are first generation students. MJC is one of two colleges in the Yosemite Community College District (YCCD). It offers eighty associate degrees and fifty-six certificate programs.

MJC requests \$2,622,764 over five years to fund a single Title V activity labeled *Removing Barriers for High Need Students*. This project is designed to address the Absolute Priority of increasing the number and proportion of high-need students who are academically prepared for, enroll in, or complete college on-time. It is comprised of three components:

- 1) **Removing academic barriers** to shorten time to graduation and transfer through comprehensive review and revision of enrollment, placement, pre-requisite, sequencing, and competency-based credit policies and procedures; Success Coaches who connect students to effective interventions; and the delivery of supplemental learning support.
- 2) **Removing procedural barriers** by coordinating support services and staff training to simplify transactional tasks for students and provide superior customer service.
- 3) **Removing resource and physical barriers** by establishing one stop Student Support Centers with online, telephone, and face to face student support.

The *Removing Barriers* project addresses the top priority of the college: improving the way we serve high need students. Objectives and activities have been carefully planned to achieve **four goals**: 1) Improve retention and success rates for disadvantaged students; 2) Shorten time to graduation or transfer; 3) Coordinate support services and staff training to simplify transactional tasks for students and provide excellent customer service; and 4) Provide Student Service Centers on two campuses with online, telephone, and face to face support.

Key Outcomes include: 1) increased fall to fall persistence of 8% for first-time students; 2) increased student transition from remedial math and English of 10%; 3) a 50% graduation or transfer rate of first-time in college students within four years, increased from 42%; 4) increased student satisfaction with college support services from 55% to 65%; and 5) a college structure that enables 90% of transactions related to students to be processed at Student Service Centers or online.

The project directly addresses Competitive Preference Priorities #1 and #2. Research-based strategies proposed in this project were designed to directly address weaknesses and significant problems documented in the Comprehensive Development Plan to improve completion, persistence and success for Hispanic students and other high need students.