

Cooperative Ph.D. program in Spanish receives \$297,000 grant

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The University of Texas-Pan American was recently awarded a \$297,000 grant to strengthen the cooperative Ph.D. program in Spanish between UTPA and the **University of Houston**. The grant, which was awarded by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), will be used to improve the existing program and expand it to other disciplines.



“The grant means greater support for those students already in the cooperative Ph.D. program and greater opportunities for those seeking a Ph.D. in other humanities disciplines within the college such as history, literature, creative writing and music,” said Dr. Glenn Martinez, chair of the Department of Modern Languages and Literature and co-principal investigator of the grant.

The cooperative Ph.D. program in Spanish, called **Pathways to the Professoriate**, allows students the opportunity to pursue their doctorate in Spanish from UH through advanced interactive courses on the UTPA campus through the use of technologies such as interactive TV (ITV) and Blackboard - a personalized online classroom environment.

“It used to be that the Pathway to the Professoriate for UTPA graduates meant displacing families, going into debt, and disrupting lives,” Martinez said. “With this grant, the Pathway to the Professoriate is opened up to UTPA graduates.”

Martinez said one of the most exciting aspects of the grant is the financial help available to qualified Ph.D. students.

“Funding will be used to provide support for Ph.D. students in the form of tuition fellowships during the regular year and assistantships during summer residences in Houston,” he said. “The grant will also provide funding for the students to work and study on the UH campus during the summer. Last summer, three students went to Houston to take doctoral-level courses. While the students all recognized the educational benefit of the residency, they also expressed the difficulty of making ends meet while in Houston. This new infusion of funding will allow more students to take advantage of summer residency opportunities in Houston.”

Martinez said approximately \$120,000 of the total grant funding is earmarked for tuition fellowships.

The funds will also enhance library collections in key areas and equip a videoconference-ready doctoral seminar room in the College of Arts and Humanities.

“While cooperative Ph.D. students have access to all of the electronic resources of UH libraries, they are often disadvantaged by the lack of certain advanced-level print materials,” Martinez said. “The grant will address this need.”

Money will also go to support networking opportunities between the graduate faculty at UH and UTPA, and to conduct an extensive program evaluation so the UTPA/UH model for collaborative doctoral education can become a model for the development of doctoral-level educational opportunities at Hispanic Serving Institutions around the country.

“UTPA has long been at a disadvantage for developing doctoral-level educational opportunities in the arts and humanities for the people of the Rio Grande Valley,” Martinez said. “This grant will make it possible for UTPA to demonstrate the superior level of its faculty and the quality of its students. Within the next four years, UTPA students will be entering the faculty ranks as Ph.D.s in universities across the country. When this happens, UTPA will be in a solid position to build its own stand-alone doctoral programs in a variety of humanities disciplines.”

The grant was co-authored with Dr. **Nicolás Kanellos**, Brown Foundation professor of Hispanic Studies at UH, and technology support was provided by Raul Saenz, UTPA’s video network supervisor, and his staff, as well as Jane LeMaster, executive director of the Center for Online Learning, Teaching and Technology, and her staff. FIPSE grants support innovative educational reform projects that can serve as national models for the improvement of postsecondary education.

For more information about the cooperative Ph.D. program in Spanish or to apply, contact Martinez at 956/381-3441.