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Media Alert

U.S. Department of Education, FIPSE Grant to Texas A&M University For Family-University-Student Engagement (FUSE) Project

WHAT: COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS - The U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) has awarded a \$660,000 grant (Award No: P116B100282) to the Texas A&M (TAMU) Research Foundation to implement FUSE (Family-University-Student Engagement), a student college access, mentoring, and retention project. The project will be funded 100 percent from federal fund sources. The grant has been awarded to Texas A&M University's Research Foundation which will support the TAMU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences' Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors) Parental Communication Initiative in South Texas, which will partner with the University's Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies to implement the 3-year project.

WHEN: The FUSE Project activities begin January 2011 and extend to December 31, 2013.

DETAILS: FUSE will develop, test, and prepare for replication and dissemination this family-focused student recruitment and mentoring initiative. The project's overriding goal is to improve recruitment, persistence, and graduation rates for students from low-income families in the Texas Rio Grande Valley and it will replicate this project and disseminate it to other institutions serving similar populations. Abriendo Puertas, a state-wide, nationally recognized organization, will be responsible for the Rio Grande Valley aspect of the project. Services provided at the main campus will be coordinated through the Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies, to include peer mentoring of the FUSE students during their freshmen and sophomore years.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for Texas A&M to engage our undergraduates in peer mentoring roles with students transitioning to college life. Many of our students have experienced the challenges of acclimating to a large research university from families unfamiliar with academic life," says Dr. Pamela Matthews, associate provost for undergraduate studies. "We know that enabling our students to be actively involved in 'giving back' opportunities—to other people and other communities—provides them

high-impact, service-learning rewards that enhance their academic experience and stay with them a lifetime.”

Once the selection of the first cohort of FUSE students is completed this spring, the group’s first formal activity will be to attend a New Student Conference together this summer, where the new students will meet their Regents’ Scholar mentors. During the year, the mentors will coordinate for FUSE students one-on-one and small group mentoring sessions, structured as informal and formal learning communities.

“We believe that with the combined expertise and experience of these two Texas A&M entities, and the support of the Department of Education’s FIPSE award, we are developing a methodology which will provide a support system for first generation students not only to attend but also to succeed at our greatest public universities in Texas. It is our hope that this model will be replicated by other major universities to address the changing demographics of Texas and educate the future leaders of our country,” says Dr. Hector Aldape, director of the Abriendo Puertas initiative.