Tara Smith Testifies Before US House of Representatives

This summer, Tara Smith, RMC Research Associate, was called before the House Ways and Means Committee's Subcommittee on Human Resources in Washington, DC to provide members with information regarding evaluation efforts to help families support their children and escape poverty. She summarized the Center's ongoing efforts to evaluate two sector-based training programs with a unique two-generation focus.

Sector-based training programs are designed to equip workers with skills that are in demand and will lead to well-paid careers in growing industries. Two-generation programs provide parents with needed training and education and simultaneously place a strong emphasis on the intellectual and emotional growth of their children. By helping both parents and children, a two-generation approach aims to lift the entire family out of poverty.

The Ray Marshall Center has been conducting outcome and impacts evaluations of local workforce development programs since 2006. The first program Smith mentioned in her testimony, Capital IDEA, is funded by Travis County and takes a sector-based approach through collaboration with Austin Community College, employers and industry groups to prepare participants to succeed in the workplace.
The Influence of Activities and Coursework on Postsecondary Enrollment and One-Year Persistence for the Class of 2010

Using linked data from the Student Futures Project and the National Student Clearinghouse, this report finds that the 11th and 12th grade activities and courses examined in this report are closely linked to postsecondary enrollment and persistence.

Upcoming Events

Training for Regional Energy in North Dakota (TREND) Project Visits
Greg Cumpton, Amna Khan, and Heath Prince will travel to North Dakota in October to meet with community colleges and other stakeholders in the TREND Project. RMC researchers will discuss project implementation and challenges met by these organizations.

Researchers to Travel to GROW Regions
In October and November, RMC researchers Ashweeta Patnaik, Amna Khan, Heath Prince, and Dan O'Shea will travel to various GROW regional sites to meet with one stop operators regarding project implementation. They will travel to the Upper, Middle, and Lower Rio Grande Valley.

The second program, CareerAdvance®, provides training for parents of Head Start and Early Head Start children for careers in nursing, health information technology and other allied health professions. CareerAdvance® was launched in 2009 based on a program design created by the Ray Marshall Center in collaboration with researchers at Harvard University and the Community Action Project of Tulsa County, which operates most of Tulsa's Head Start and Early Head Start centers.

In her testimony, Smith highlighted the effectiveness of these and similar sector-based strategies, as well as related career pathway programs, which are targeted at local labor market needs and support low-income adults in overcoming barriers to program completion and labor market transitions. She pointed the subcommittee to various scholarly publications that support the Ray Marshall Center's findings: sector-based workforce development programs that support a two-generation approach have had positive impacts on families and local economies.

"The Federal government can help build the needed knowledge base for understanding what works by funding evaluation studies of its investments using a variety of research methods that have been proven both rigorous and cost-effective," Smith concluded.

Article in Education Week Sites TELC Study

A recent article in Education Week cites the Texas Early Childhood Workforce Compensation Study to highlight the fact that early-childhood educators and caretakers in Texas receive lower pay than their peers in other states. This study was commissioned by the Texas Early Learning Council, and the report discussing the results of surveys of child care workers across the state of Texas was released in July. Data collection and analysis for the study were conducted by Cynthia Juniper, Anjali Gupta, and Daniel Schroeder at the Ray Marshall Center in collaboration with the School of Social Work's Child and Family Research Institute (CFRI) at the University of Texas at Austin. Surveys captured information on child care professional demographic characteristics, work history, compensation, benefits, and retention-related factors.

The Aspen THINKXCHANGE Welcomes Ascend Fellows

The Aspen Institute has a policy program for two-generation efforts called Ascend. In October, 2012, The Aspen Institute gathered its Ascend fellows, including RMC’s Dr. Chris King, as well as other influential thinkers to draw on their experience and imagination to develop ideas that will benefit a "legacy of economic security and educational success" for generations to come.

Ascend’s recently released report, Making Economic Security a Family Tradition; Two-Generation Solutions from the Aspen THINKXCHANGE, describes the purpose of the event: "The Aspen THINKXCHANGE gathered 150 dynamic leaders from across sectors - from cutting-edge community-based programs, policy, academia,
Grande regions, as well as the Cameron and South Texas regions.

philanthropy, business, and media - to discuss and debate opportunities and solutions for moving children and their parents toward economic mobility and opportunity."

This publication offers insight into how two-generation solutions can be integrated into government programs on the local, state, and federal levels. Two-generation solutions focus on extracting whole families from the cycle of poverty by providing education and support services to children and their parents. In Section 2 of the report, adapted remarks from Chris King and his fellow panelists can be found.

RMC Partners with the Texas Education Research Center

The Texas Education Research Center (ERC) is a research center and data clearinghouse created by the Texas legislature in 2006. The RMC was initially a partner with the ERC, housed at the University of Texas at Dallas, but more recently has evolved into a new partnership based at the University of Texas at Austin. The UT-Austin ERC has moved to the RMC. Dr. Celeste Alexander serves as managing Director of the ERC. Its Co-Principal Investigators are Dr. Pedro Reyes, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UT System and LBJ School faculty member, and RMC Director, Dr. Chris King.

The nonpartisan ERC is tasked with hosting information from state agencies and providing access to data for scientific inquiry and policy making purposes. It contains a broad range of linked, student- and school-level data including all public education information from P-12 schools from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), information from both public and private higher education institutions through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and training program, child care and employment data from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). The integrated nature of this database allows researchers to follow the trajectory Texas students take from elementary school through postsecondary institutions and into their careers. Additionally, data from several national datasets are also hosted by the ERC including those from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). The ERC warehouse today holds one of the largest and most complete Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems in the country.

Currently, in addition to RMC researchers, LBJ School Assistant Professor Jane Lincove and Economics Professor Sandra Black and several of their doctoral students are conducting research using ERC data as part of RMC's ongoing Texas Workforce Data Quality Initiative. In the near future, other researchers from around the country will be able to apply for access to these data for approved research projects.

RMC Bids Adieu to Old Friends and Welcomes New Faces

This summer marked the departure of several Center staff.

Dr. Anjali Gupta recently moved to India to continue working on issues related to education as a staffer for the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). Shortly thereafter, Laura Stelling, Graduate Research Assistant and student at the LBJ School of Public Affairs graduated and was offered a position at the Austin Independent School District. She has
taken on a position as Evaluation Analyst with the Department of Research and Evaluation. Gary Davis, the Bryna and Henry David Fellow and class president at the LBJ School of Public Affairs graduated and accepted a position at SEDL, a non-profit education research, development, and dissemination organization based in Austin. He is a program specialist in their Texas Comprehensive Center, focusing on providing support and technical assistance to the Texas Education Agency to help implement, scale up and sustain its college and career readiness initiatives.

Dr. Gupta before she left for the Near East.

While some were leaving the RMC, others were joining us. First, Ashweeta Pantnaik joined RMC as a Social Science Research Associate. She most recently hails from the University of Texas A&M in College Station, where she worked as a research scientist. Amna Kahn also rejoined the Center as a Social Science Research Associate, returning to RMC after time working in Pakistan. Before the semester began, Amanda Briggs was hired as a Graduate Research Assistant from the LBJ School of Public Affairs. She will be working on the Dual Generation Strategy Initiative Project, amongst others. She is in her second year at LBJ.

Laura Stilling mingled between conference presentations.

Project Updates

Student Futures Project Sees Dramatic Increase in Low-Income High School Graduates' Enrollment in College

Three new Student Futures Project reports were published by RMC this month. The Central Texas Student Futures Project started in 2005 as a local coalition of educators, community stakeholders and researchers, supported mainly by the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and TG. The primary goal of this coalition is to improve postsecondary enrollment access and persistence in the region for all students, but in particular for the growing population of students from backgrounds that have traditionally been less likely to enroll in college.

The growth of this population of high school graduates in the region has been dramatic. In 2008, a quarter of high school graduates received free or reduced lunch during their senior year, by 2011 that figure rose to above a third of all high school graduates, to 37%. Not only has the share of low income high school graduates grown, but growth in the region means that the number of low income students has increased dramatically. To provide a sense of the scale of the challenges faced by this project: in 2008, just under 2,700 low income students graduated high school, by 2011 that number was just over 5,000. The need for regional supports to help these students successfully transition to colleges is clear.

Despite the tremendous challenge, regional efforts to improve postsecondary enrollment rates for the population of students of greatest concern have been incredibly effective. In 2008 only 39% of
low income high school graduates enrolled in college the following fall. Four years later, in 2011, 46% of low income students enrolled in college the following fall. This 7% point increase over the span of 4 years is unprecedented and demonstrates that the coalition of partners has produced dramatic, sustained results. The elements of the plan are working to get more students to enroll in college.

Reports out this month provide statistics regarding post-secondary education enrollment trends in Central Texas in 2010 and 2012, amongst other trends.