

**Project Title:** IDEA C3: Culture, Character, and College

**Type of Grant:** Early-phase

**Absolute Priorities:** 1 (High-need students) and 4 (Postsecondary Preparedness)

**Students/Grades Served:** 27,980 students in grades 6-12 by year 5 (70,065 cumulative)

**Project Description:** **There is a new frontier in postsecondary preparedness** that few traditional *or* charter school districts have begun to explore—let alone conduct research on—and that is **the importance of developing a college-going identity to a student’s choice of, matriculation to, and persistence in college.** Harvard Graduate School of Education researchers have shone a national spotlight on what is missing in the support of primarily low-income, minority, first-generation college goers, and that is a developmental approach to college access and success: competencies that young people need to develop in order to plan for and succeed in higher education. These include articulating aspirations and expectations, forming and maintaining strong peer and adult relationships, motivation and goal-setting, and self-regulatory skills, such as planning. In short, **helping students develop a college-going identity in addition to the crucial support for developing their academic skills and their college knowledge.** To help students be successful in postsecondary education and persist through to college graduation, schools must build *all three* in its students.

**Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes:** For this EIR initiative, **IDEA will test the hypothesis that increasing students’ social and emotional skills, developing their character, and increasing their knowledge, skills, attitude, and beliefs will help build and strengthen their college-going identities, which will, in turn, increase their rates of college completion.** To this end, IDEA will use EIR funds to develop college-going identity strategies summarized above by:

1. **Creating a customized curriculum** to help high-need, low-income, and/or first-generation students in grades 6-12 develop a college-going identity;
2. **Creating, piloting, iterating on, and improving a research-based rubric** to measure the development of a student’s college-going identity over time and of national significance;
3. **Providing professional development for educators** (College Success Team, and counselors) in the importance and use of the curriculum and the rubric; and
4. **Evaluating the impact of these three interventions** on college enrollment and persistence.

**Special project features:** IDEA’s exceptional approach includes four key ingredients: **1)** A novel and innovative field of study (college-going identity); **2)** Partnerships with leaders in college preparedness; **3)** A history of successfully developing cutting-edge systems, tools, and initiatives; and **4)** A long-range plan for success (a potential Mid-phase follow-up project to see this long-range college success project through to college graduation). All of these are in service of finding out what works to close the gap in college degree attainment with more affluent students and get an ever-increasing high-need, low-income, majority Hispanic student population through college graduation within six years of graduating from high school.

**List of implementation sites (LEA(s) and/or schools) for years 1 and 2 of the project:** IDEA Public Schools in three Texas regions—Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio, and Austin

**List all organizations partnering with this project:** Education First, InsideTrack, college and university partners (data-sharing agreements with Austin College, Beloit College, Colby College, Johns Hopkins University, St. Mary’s University, and the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley) and third party evaluator, Copia Consulting, LLC.