

CENA at UTPA: A new program to foment agricultural science education and careers with students at the University of Texas Pan-American

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The primary goal of the CENA program is to overcome barriers to agricultural education and careers in south Texas through the establishment of an innovative program in agroecology and the study of sustainable food systems based at the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA). The program is designed to recruit and retain outstanding students into agriculture related disciplines that focus on the complex relationships between agricultural systems and community well-being. The CENA program at UTPA consists of four distinct elements: (1) development of innovative **curricula** to support an undergraduate concentration and graduate area in agroecology and sustainable agriculture, (2) expand **experiential learning** opportunities through research internships with USDA laboratories, university researchers, and practitioners of sustainable agriculture; (3) the establishment of a **network** that draws from research, teaching, and professional expertise which allows students access to educational and professional opportunities in agriculture related fields. (4) increased **accessibility of agroecology** related content in high schools science courses. The program is funded by the USDA, and will support 36 undergraduate research internships, one MS level graduate student, and 60 local area STEM teachers for their participation in summer workshops over the project period (2013-2017). Measureable outcomes will include increased understanding of the intersection of agriculture and society among students and teachers, an increase in the number of applicants to UTPA's Environmental Sciences BS program, and an increase in the number of applications to graduate schools. We also aim to increase the number of UTPA graduates at local USDA/ agriculture research organizations. In effect, we aim to create and foment a high school-college-career pipeline for Hispanic students in the agroecological and food related sciences.