

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE
House Appropriations – Article III Committee
Presentation by Dr. William A. Staples, President
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Operations Support for Downward Expansion

During the 82nd Legislature in 2011, the University of Houston-Clear Lake received authority to offer lower division courses to freshmen and sophomore students. In fall 2014, UH-Clear Lake made the transition from an upper-level to a four-year university with the enrollment of approximately 400 freshmen and sophomore students. The freshman class profile included an average SAT score of 1062 and a high school grade point average of 3.47 on a 4.0 scale. From fall 2014 to spring 2015, the freshman retention rate was 89%.

Universities across the state that have expanded from upper-level to four-year prior to UHCL have found it necessary to seek additional state operating funds to provide the full array of core courses required for lower division students. Additional funds are needed until such time that enrollment grows to a size that formula funding and tuition will sustain the operation of a four-year university. Operations support for downward expansion for UHCL is projected to be necessary until enrollment of first-time in college students (FTIC) of 1500 full-time equivalents (FTE) is reached. The increased enrollment, formula funding, tuition and retention of these students to the junior and senior levels will provide the financial stability required to continue to advance these lower division programs and meet the needs of these students on a long-term basis.

Tuition Revenue Bonds/Capital Construction Funding

STEM and Classroom Building

With the enrollment of approximately 400 freshmen and sophomore students in fall 2014, UHCL needs to provide adequate and up-to-date facilities for the curriculum requirements for these new students. Specifically, these needs would include:

- teaching laboratories for the natural and life science classes required for freshmen and sophomore students;

- faculty offices for instructors charged with conducting this curriculum;
- additional space to support research and academic excellence in the STEM fields, which includes the professional development of teachers as well as increasing the number of new science and math educators;
- and large classrooms to accommodate larger lower-division courses.

UHCL currently has an array of STEM majors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Three of the most frequent majors selected by incoming freshmen include biology, computer engineering and computer science.

Health Sciences and Classroom Building

The UHCL Pearland Campus, a partnership with the city of Pearland, Texas, has realized a 46.2% headcount growth since opening in fall 2010. To accommodate this growth, the UHCL Pearland Campus needs to construct a 60,000 square foot facility for classrooms, special laboratories for health-related programs, lower-level chemistry and biology labs, faculty and staff offices and student-requested support spaces such as study rooms and a bookstore.

This new facility supports the continuing significant growth in student enrollment at the Pearland Campus, the addition of the RN-to-BS Nursing program – the first significant cooperative partnering program at the Pearland Campus with local community colleges, the ability to address increasing demand for associate applied health degrees through collaborative agreements with community colleges, and the ability to extend freshman and sophomore offerings to Pearland in fall 2018.

Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities

Established in March 2008, the UHCL Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities (CADD) is staffed by faculty and students in the Applied Behavior Analysis, School Psychology and Family Therapy graduate programs. CADD's goals are to support research on autism and developmental disabilities, train current and future professionals to serve as leaders in the fields of psychology and education, and provide services to children and their families through partnerships with area school districts and community organizations.

Current CADD activities include school-based consultation for teachers of children with autism and developmental disabilities, clinic-based intensive behavior therapy for children with autism ages 3 to 8, clinic-based language therapy and parent training for adults with autism, and comprehensive diagnostic assessments for children suspected of having a disability. More than 200 families are currently waiting for services through CADD.

CADD currently partners with a number of public and private agencies and foundations to provide services, including the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services and the Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County.

Requested funds will provide CADD with the much-needed infrastructure to attract additional funding from national agencies such as National Institutes of Health and the Department of Education and expand vital services to an increased number of individuals afflicted with autism and other developmental disabilities. We particularly want to expand the reach of our programs to underserved rural areas of Texas through the use of telepractice and to adults with autism, who are highly underserved in our state.

Houston Partnership for Environmental Studies

The Environmental Institute of Houston (EIH) is a partnership among University of Houston-Clear Lake, University of Houston, agencies, businesses and environmental organizations. EIH supports research, professional development for teachers and broad-based participatory efforts for environmental issue resolution.

The focus of current research is to empower communities and organizations with technical tools to increase resiliency to disasters (e.g., chemical spills, storms and drought), while minimizing losses to critical ecosystem services including water quality treatment, fisheries and flood mitigation. EIH research and technical services provided to the agencies and citizens of Texas directly meets the goals of many federal and state environmental regulatory programs and policies (e.g., the Galveston Bay Plan, Texas Coastal Zone Management and Clean Water

Act). EIH has an established reputation of scientific credibility and objectivity in the resolution of environmental issues.

The additional funding requested by EIH will be used to modernize and expand our community outreach and research functions. Specifically,

- funds will be used to establish and certify an environmental laboratory that would support local, regional and state governments, agencies and organizations engaged in environmental monitoring, research, conservation and public health protection;
- funds will also be used to modernize both field and laboratory Geographic Information System (GIS) programs and technology at EIH to effectively partner with and support local, regional and state natural resource agencies and to support university academic and continuing adult technical education programs;
- and state funding provided to EIH will be used to competitively leverage resources to meet external research grant match requirements in order to obtain additional external funding to support students engaged in various research and outreach programs. EIH has been very successful in securing additional federal funding through careful use of its existing resources with a greater than 4 to 1 return on federal grants obtained versus state base funding.