San Antonio College (SAC) Empowerment Center,

Abstract for 2015 NACADA Outstanding Advising Award Program

The San Antonio College (SAC) Empowerment Center, which is comprised of three programs, was established in fall 2009. Our mission is to advocate for and empower women, non-traditional students and community members by transforming their lives through a comprehensive system of quality educational supportive and retention services. Clients served include first-generation college students, single parents, academically underprepared students, welfare recipients and other low-income members of our community who are entering or re-entering higher education. These populations are often overlooked in traditional outreach efforts and often experience failure in higher education. Through active outreach and positive word of mouth, since its establishment in fall 2009 through January 15, 2014, the Center has advised 5,266 individuals.

A one-stop services approach is designed to increase at-risk student success, persistence and graduation. Empowerment Center advisors and personal counselors provide holistic case management, advisement/counseling, enrollment assistance and career exploration. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are utilized to identify students’ strengths and barriers to assist them in setting goals and to keep track of their progress. Since many of our clients are not computer literate, basic computing workshops are offered. These comprehensive educational services offered in a supportive environment, a one-stop delivery approach and advocacy and support for a population that often has no support system are all essential features of the Empowerment Center that have helped our students succeed.