

Adams State University PPOHA ABSTRACT

With over 31% of its undergraduate population of Hispanic ethnicity, Adams State University (ASU) is Colorado's premier four-year Hispanic-Serving Institution. As part of its vision of Inclusive Excellence, ASU embraces its role as a Hispanic-Serving Institution by seeking to provide Hispanic and low-income students with the educational opportunities and services they need to attain a degree and succeed in their chosen careers.

Over the past seven years ASU has added four Master of Arts degrees and graduate enrollment has boomed (932 in Fall 2013), yet the graduate school lacks cohesiveness and visibility as a university presence. The four-year master's degree attainment rate for Hispanic master's students in the 2008 cohort was a mere 50%. The 2014 PPOHA funding opportunity will expand ASU's foundation as a university by unifying its graduate school programming through the establishment of a Graduate Support Center (GSC) and academic support services that address the needs of its many Hispanic and low-income graduate students who wish to attain a master's degree. For the first time, ASU graduate students, and Hispanic and low-income students in particular, will have comprehensive graduate center services and staff dedicated to assisting them in navigating graduate student life and the path to master's completion.

To improve the four-year master's degree attainment rate for Hispanic and low-income students by 15% over the grant period, ASU's PPOHA project focuses strategically on three project goals, which will ground the creation of the GSC and establish a campus and an online presence that supports graduate student success:

- 1) **Graduate Student Support Services:** Develop and implement the infrastructure for graduate level academic support services, both on campus and online, to support graduate student success and degree completion;
- 2) **Financial Support for Graduate Students:** Provide financial support or incentives to increase access to and persistence in graduate school for Hispanic and low-income students;
- 3) **Faculty and Staff Learning Communities:** Improve ASU faculty and staff capacity for providing services to Hispanic and low-income graduate students through professional development and best practice sharing.

To achieve the project's objectives, ASU's Graduate Support Center will design and coordinate a series of academic and professional skill-building workshops, a team of Alumni Mentors, access to streamlined university processes, and incentive stipends and graduate assistantships to connect graduate students to the resources they need for academic success. The capacity of faculty and staff to engage ASU's more than 500 Hispanic and low-income graduate students and address their academic support needs will increase substantially through the project's professional development and best practice sharing activities. Data analysis will support activity improvements continuously throughout the project.

To build its capacity to develop, implement, and sustain these vital services within the five-year grant period, ASU requests \$2,838,865 in PPOHA funding. This investment of support will substantially increase master's degree attainment for ASU's Hispanic and low-income students.

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