

# **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

## **Between Laredo College and United Independent School District**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is made and entered into by and between Laredo College ("LC"), a political subdivision and public junior college of the State of Texas, and United Independent School District ("UISD"), a political subdivision and public school district in the State of Texas. Collectively, LC and UISD shall be referred to as the "Parties."

This MOU will be effective for a two-year period, beginning on August 1, 2025, and ending on August 1, 2027, subject to termination provisions outlined in this MOU. The term of this Agreement may be extended upon written approval of the Parties.

### **Recitals**

**WHEREAS**, UISD and LC recognize the need to re-engage students who left high school without a diploma by providing innovative and flexible learning pathways that meet students' academic, emotional, and personal needs;

**WHEREAS**, UISD aims to provide support to adult learners (ages 18-26) by offering a comprehensive dropout recovery program through the Bridging Roads to Independence, Diplomas, Graduation, and Employment (BRIDGE) Academy Initiative, which combines high school diploma completion and career certifications in collaboration with LC;

**WHEREAS**, LC and UISD agree to create a collaborative environment for these students, offering academic courses, career certifications, and holistic support services, including counseling, mental health services, and workforce readiness programs;

**WHEREAS**, the Parties wish to formalize their agreement to work together in the operation and management of the BRIDGE Academy Initiative for the benefit of the target population.

### **1. Purpose of the Program**

The purpose of this MOU is to outline the collaboration between UISD and LC in the establishment and operation of the BRIDGE Academy, which will provide a flexible learning environment for former UISD students aged 18-26 who left without a diploma, offering them opportunities to earn their high school diploma and obtain career certifications for workforce readiness.

The BRIDGE Academy will also provide wraparound services such as career counseling, social services, mental health support, and academic advising to ensure the holistic success of the students.

## 2. Program Goals

The goals of the BRIDGE Academy are to:

- A. Re-engage students aged 18-26 who previously left high school without a diploma, offering them customized educational pathways.
- B. Prepare students for STAAR EOC testing, when applicable, to help them meet high school graduation requirements.
- C. Provide career certifications that align with workforce needs and offer better employment opportunities.
- D. Ensure student success by providing access to mental health services, social services, career counseling, and other support services.
- E. Foster students' transition to postsecondary education or directly into the workforce.

## 3. UISD's Responsibilities

- A. **Identification and Recruitment:** UISD will identify eligible students through its data systems and engage students through interest surveys. UISD will provide recruitment materials and assist in outreach efforts to potential students. UISD will appoint a liaison to facilitate communication between UISD and LC.
- B. **Curriculum and Instruction:** UISD will provide instruction in high school diploma completion courses. UISD will provide qualified instructors for these courses, ensuring alignment with relevant standards.
- C. **Student Support Services:** UISD will provide all required course instruction and resources required for students to meet TEA graduation requirements. UISD will manage attendance, PEIMS reporting, and coordinate services as required by TEA, if necessary.
- D. **Coordination and Communication:** UISD will appoint a liaison with authority to approve course offerings, certify student eligibility, and communicate directly with LC's liaison. UISD will coordinate with LC for orientation, registration, counseling, and other essential student services.
- E. UISD will financially support the personnel needed to fulfill UISD's responsibilities.
- F. On or before June 25, 2025, the Parties will collaborate to draft and execute a mutually agreeable **Appendix "A,"** which will define the Parties' financial responsibilities related to this MOU.

#### 4. Laredo College's Responsibilities

- A. **Program Facilities and Instruction:** LC will provide the necessary facilities at its campuses for the BRIDGE Academy. LC will offer college-level instruction and career certification programs, with courses aligned to industry needs and applicable federal and state requirements.
- B. **Student Support Services:** LC will provide access to wellness health services, social services, career counseling, and other support and academic services.
- C. **Coordination and Communication:** LC will appoint a liaison with authority to approve course offerings and communicate directly with UISD's liaison. LC will coordinate with UISD for registration, informational sessions, counseling, and other essential student services.
- D. LC will financially support the personnel needed to fulfill LC's responsibilities.
- E. On or before June 25, 2025, the Parties will collaborate to draft and execute a mutually agreeable **Appendix "A,"** which will define the Parties' financial responsibilities related to this MOU.

#### 5. Program Evaluation and Accountability

Both parties will designate a liaison in writing to evaluate the program's effectiveness and address areas for improvement. The following metrics will be used for the program's evaluation:

- A. Student retention and success in high school completion and certification courses;
- B. Completion rates for career and technical certifications;
- C. Graduation and employment outcomes; and
- D. Student feedback via surveys and focus groups.

#### 6. Data Use and Confidentiality

The Parties agree to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), ensuring that all student education records and protected student data is kept confidential and used only for purposes directly related to the program's goals in accordance with FERPA and applicable State laws. Both Parties will exchange data necessary for tracking student progress, completion rates, and employment outcomes. Access to personally identifiable information shall be limited by the Parties to those with legitimate educational interests.

## **7. Funding and Sustainability**

Both LC and UISD will report students for state funding purposes consistent with applicable law and regulation. Parties will work collaboratively in seeking funding with outside agencies and/or subsidies to support BRIDGE goals.

## **8. External Communication**

LC and UISD will work collaboratively to ensure effective external communication for the BRIDGE Academy Initiative. The Parties will both designate their own liaisons to approve all external communication(s).

## **9. Student Eligibility**

The BRIDGE Academy Initiative is designed for former UISD students aged 18-26 who withdrew from high school without earning a diploma and seek to re-engage in their education. Eligible students must have completed at least 40% of their required high school credits and/or STAAR End-of-Course assessments, as determined by UISD's academic review process.

For students pursuing career and technical certifications from LC, eligibility will depend on program-specific prerequisites, with some certifications requiring a high school diploma or GED and others available without these credentials.

## **10. BRIDGE Academy Location**

The BRIDGE Academy shall be located at Laredo College South, 5500 South Zapata Highway in Laredo, Texas 78046.

## **11. Faculty Selection, Supervision, and Evaluation**

A. United Independent School District will:

- 1) Hire and compensate qualified faculty for high school diploma completion courses in accordance with UISD policies;
- 2) Supervise and evaluate faculty using the same performance standards and evaluation procedures applied to UISD educators;
- 3) Ensure that UISD faculty prepare students for high school graduation requirements; and
- 4) Arrange for substitute teachers when UISD faculty are absent due to school district obligations, leave, or unforeseen circumstances.

B. Laredo College will:

- 1) Hire and pay qualified instructors in accordance to LC policies and regulations, which include an appropriate criminal background check in accordance with LC's policies and standards.
- 2) Supervise and evaluate the instructors with the applicable standards used for faculty evaluations;
- 3) Arrange for substitutes when instructors are absent.

## **12. Course Curriculum, Instruction, and Grading**

LC and UISD will collaborate to establish and maintain the curriculum, instructional standards, and grading policies for the BRIDGE Academy Initiative.

LC will ensure that career and technical certification courses adhere to industry standards, accreditation requirements, and workforce development guidelines, maintaining the same level of rigor and expectations as courses offered to LC students.

UISD will oversee the high school diploma completion curriculum, ensuring alignment with TEA standards and compliance with all state-mandated graduation requirements.

UISD will provide advance notice of at least two (2) days for any planned activities that may interrupt scheduled course instruction. LC will administer course evaluations at the end of each term for certification programs, while UISD will handle all state-mandated assessments required for diploma completion.

## **13. Academic Policies**

Course performance will become part of each student's permanent academic record, with high school coursework documented by UISD and career and technical certification coursework documented by LC.

Students enrolled in LC career and technical certification courses are subject to LC's academic policies, student code of conduct, and disciplinary standards as outlined in the LC catalog, including academic standing requirements and grievance procedures.

Students enrolled in high school diploma completion courses must adhere to UISD policies, including those governing student conduct, attendance, and academic performance.

## **14. Student Support Services and Instructional Materials**

UISD will provide enrolled BRIDGE Academy students with access to technology, instructional resources, and academic support services required for diploma completion courses.

LC will provide an on-campus informational session to all enrolled high school students prior to the beginning of the course. These sessions will include information regarding campus layout, academic policies, standards and expectations, support services, syllabus and curriculum, and student opportunities and commitments. Students will meet with LC Counselors for academic advising on best practices and classroom success strategies prior to course start.

Students will be registered directly for LC courses by LC staff during regularly scheduled registrations, or during special registration sessions. Students enrolled in courses shall be eligible to utilize the same or comparable academic and instructional support services that are afforded college students on all LC campuses, including academic advising, academic coaching, tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing center, career center, counseling center, and disability services.

## **15. Termination**

Either party may terminate this MOU without cause with six months' written notice. Termination will take effect six months after notice is provided or when all students currently enrolled have completed their coursework, whichever is later.

## **16. Legal Compliance**

Both Parties agree to comply with all applicable state and federal laws, including FERPA, Title IX, and other regulations related to the privacy and safety of students.

## **17. Dispute Resolution**

In the event of any disagreement between the Parties concerning funding responsibilities or financial obligations under this MOU, the designated liaisons for LC and UISD shall meet in good faith to resolve the matter collaboratively. If the liaisons are unable to reach an agreement within thirty (30) business days, the matter shall be escalated to the President of Laredo College and the Superintendent of United Independent School District for further discussion. If no resolution is reached within thirty (30) business days following the escalation, either Party may initiate the six-month written notice of termination outlined in Section 15 of this MOU.

## **18. Miscellaneous Provisions**

- A. **Authorization of Agreement:** The Parties represent that the execution of this MOU has been duly authorized and that this MOU constitutes a valid and enforceable obligation of such party according to its terms.
- B. **Non-exclusive:** This MOU does not preclude either party from entering into similar agreements with other entities.

- C. **Amendments:** This MOU may be amended only by mutual written agreement, executed by both Parties.
- D. **Relationship of Parties:** Neither party is an employee, partner, joint venturer, or agent of the other and will make no representation as such. Neither party has the authority to bind the other party.
- E. **Force Majeure:** Neither party shall be liable or responsible to the other for any loss or damage or for any delays or failure to perform due to causes beyond its reasonable control including, but not limited to, acts of God, strikes, epidemics, war, riots, flood, fire, sabotage, terrorist activity or threat, and new order or restriction by any governmental authority.
- F. **Governing Law & Venue:** This MOU will be construed, enforced, and governed by the laws of the State of Texas. The venue for any dispute arising from or related to this MOU will be in Webb County.
- G. **No Waiver of Immunity:** Nothing in this MOU shall be construed as a waiver of sovereign, governmental, or qualified immunity under Texas law for either party.
- H. **Severability:** If any provision of this MOU is determined by a proper court or authority to be invalid, illegal, or unenforceable in any respect, such invalidity, illegality, or unenforceability will not affect or impair the remainder of this MOU, and this MOU will remain in full force and effect without such invalid, illegal, or unenforceable provision.
- I. **Notices:** All notices, demands, requests, or other communications required to be given or sent under this MOU by UISD or LC will be in writing and sent by email, first-class mail postage prepaid, or hand delivery as follows:
1. To UISD  
  
United Independent School District  
Emma Leza, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction  
201 Lindenwood, Laredo, TX 78045  
[eleza@uisd.net](mailto:eleza@uisd.net)
  2. To LC  
  
Laredo College- Fort McIntosh Campus,  
Sandra Cortez, Dean of Community Education  
West End Washington Street, Laredo, TX 78040  
[sandra.cortez@laredo.edu](mailto:sandra.cortez@laredo.edu)

**In Witness thereof, this MOU has been executed on behalf of the Parties as of the effective date written in the second paragraph.**

**United Independent School District**

**Laredo College**

**By: \_\_\_\_\_**

**By: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Dr. Gerardo Cruz,  
UISD's Superintendent of Schools**

**Minita Ramirez, PhD.  
President of Laredo College**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**