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EDUCATION:
College- or Institutional-Level Applications:
Research Sources and External Evaluators

Office of University Initiatives
Gil Harootunian, PhD, Executive Director
Angelica Lopez, Administrative Analyst Specialist

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Why Is USDE A Good Model?

1. Dedicated to supporting educational success across disciplines.
2. Currently being dismantled, but components will exist elsewhere (e.g., other federal agencies, state educational agencies).
3. Transfer knowledge gained from model … to wherever grant funds end up being house.
4. Key source of research and evaluators: Institute for Education Sciences (IES) will likely remain as core component of Department of Education.

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Education: Covers Many Fields + Areas

- ★ From Science Education to Student Advising
- ★ From Accelerated Degrees to Online Degrees

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Successful Awards
Shepherded by University Initiatives

Note: The range of support provided by University Initiatives varies as much as the projects and the teams. The support ranges from developing a project from scratch to editing, consulting, and/or budgeting. University Initiatives is responsive to the needs of the project and of the team.

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Successful Awards
Shepherded or Developed by University Initiatives

Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (undergraduate level)

- Enseñamos en el Valle Central - Kremen, w/ two Fresno City College and Reedley College - ~$3.75M
- “STEAM: Enriched Pathways” - CSM, LCOE, JCAST - ~$3M
- West Hills Community College District: subaward for Satellite Campus - ~$1M

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Successful Awards
Shepherded or Developed by University Initiatives

PPOHA = Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans (graduate level)

- Blue Ribbon Online Graduate Campus (aka Grad Net) - ~$2.8M
- Finish in Five (4+1 accelerated degrees) - ~$2M

Each was for multiple disciplines.

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Successful Awards
Shepherded by University Initiatives

- Asian American, Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) award to increase AAPI representation in Criminology Department majors - ~$1.25M
- Office of Special Education Personnel award to provide scholarships and professional development to Special Education majors - ~$1.25M.

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Successful Awards
Developed by University Initiatives

Postsecondary Student Success Grant Program - Educational Research Study: Strengthening Advising, Strengthening Results (“START”) - ~$8M

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Proven Competitive Strategy: Consult Sources and Evaluators Who Have Been Vetted by USDE

Institute of Education Sciences' - "What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)" @ https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/

Practice Guides, Intervention Reports, and Individual Studies to enable applicants to make "evidence-based decisions" about what works.

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WWC sources meet three tiers of evidence: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/essa

Tier 1: Strong Evidence of Effectiveness. Meets WWC standards "without reservations." Well designed and implemented Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT).

Tier 2: Moderate Evidence. Quasi-experimental study (no random selection or assignment w/ comparison groups).

Tier 3: Promising Evidence. Well designed and implemented correlational study w/ statistical controls for selection bias.

Tier 4: Demonstrates a Rationale. Well designed Logic Model, supported by research, and study underway.

FRESNO STATE ➡ **$8M "START" award**

Study Designed To Meet Tier 1: Strong Evidence.

The START advising project will use a randomized control trial designed to meet What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations. Students who enter as freshmen in fall 2024, and students who enter as transfer students in fall 2024 and fall 2026, will be randomly assigned to a START advisor or regular advisor. Approximately 8,500 students will participate in the study, and half will be assigned to an advisor who received enhanced advising training and the other half will be assigned to a business-as-usual advisor. Students will be randomly assigned within their specific college at CSU, Fresno. We will use a multilevel regression model to estimate the impact of the advising intervention, accounting for the blocked natured of the random assignment, and determine how START effects vary for specific student groups (i.e. URM, low-income, first-generation, and part-time students) compared to their peers who received business-as-usual advising.

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Evidence Justification form (good model to adapt for other proposals)

U.S. Department of Education
Evidence Form

OMB No. 1894-0001
Exp. 07/31/2025

1. Level of Evidence

Select the level of evidence of effectiveness for which you are applying. See the Notice Inviting Applications for the relevant definitions and requirements.

[ ] Demonstrates a Rationale [ ] Promising Evidence [ ] Moderate Evidence [ ] Strong Evidence

2. Citation and Relevance

Fill in the chart below with the appropriate information about the studies that support your application.

A. Research/Citation	B. Relevant Outcome(s)/Relevant Finding(s)	C. Project Component(s)/Overlap of Populations and/or Settings

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Evidence Justification form

1. Cite all the sources you think best.
2. Include WWC sources in “Evidence Justification” form (or re-create similar table).
3. These sources have been vetted and, equally important, federal reviewers know that they have been vetted.

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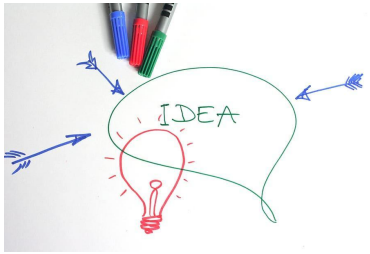
➡ $8M “START” award



Conceptual Background.

Six studies meeting What Works Clearinghouse Tier 1: Strong Evidence standards have confirmed the effectiveness of transformed and transformative advising in achieving postsecondary education academic outcomes, especially retention and timely graduation. The “START”project will provide additional insight regarding the impact of enhanced advising at four-year institutions since the majority of the existing literature has focused on community college settings.

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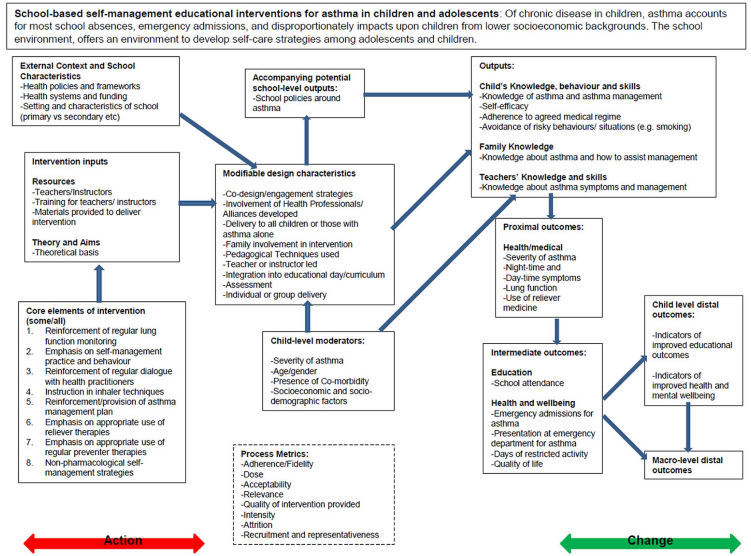
Independent Evaluators

- In demand
- Highest credibility
- Often required for major applications



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Independent Evaluator or Big Center?

An independent evaluator can pay more attention to your award, his or her expertise can align best with your work, and his or her services cost less.

A ‘big center’ evaluation often charges more for its services, provides more general expertise (such as STEM education vs. Math education), and has contracted evaluators with a bunch of awards.

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How do I find an independent evaluator?

Ask for referrals from colleagues about *their* colleagues: What external evaluators have they worked with?

Professional Sources:
American Evaluation Association
Institute of Education Sciences

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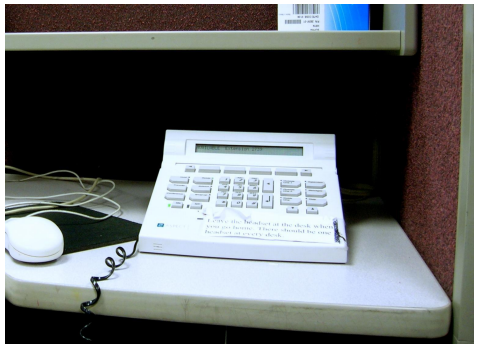

$8M START Award

Cold called WWC certified evaluators….
Search engine: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reviewer

To become one:
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Document/237#/Document_237_Becoming

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Annual Competition "Priorities" That Respond To National Need

- Absolute -required to meet
- Competitive Preference Priorities - earn additional points if met
- Invitational - Neither required nor additional point but creates "halo" around your application

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Priorities: Developing Hispanic Serving-Institution Program (DHSI): 2023

Absolute Preference [standard]: Excellent quality of the comprehensive development plan, project design, activity objectives, rationale, and promising evidence.
Competitive Preference Priority 1: Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs (up to 5 points).
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Increasing Postsecondary Education Access, Affordability, Completion, and Post-Enrollment Success (up to 5 points).
Invitational Priority: Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty

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Priorities: DHSI: 2023: How We Met

- **Competitive Preference Priority 1:** Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs (up to 5 points). West Hills CCD implemented activities to address Imposter Syndrome.
- **Competitive Preference Priority 2:** Increasing Postsecondary Education Access, Affordability, Completion, and Post-Enrollment Success (up to 5 points). CSU Fresno established satellite centers on-site at West Hills CCD.
- **Invitational Priority:** Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty. The COVID pandemic increased Imposter Syndrome and decreased transfer rates to 4-year campuses.

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Priorities: What to do about them?

If you can meet all Priorities in any given competition, go for it.

If you cannot meet all Priorities in any given competition, wait until another competition or apply to another program.

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Contact anytime:

Dr. Gil Harootunian, Executive Director,
University Initiatives
gharootunian@csufresno.edu
278-4850