For the Education grant, ***STEM-PODER***, five strategies were proposed to achieve goals and Maryellen Hamilton, Professor in the Psychology Department and Director of the grant is happy to report that in the first six months progress has already been made with activities under each of these strategies.

We are definitely servicing our target population (Hispanic/Latino/low-income STEM majors), and we believe all these efforts will lead us to achieving our Year 1 goals. By the end of October 2021, PODER tutors and mentors were hired and we began the expansion of our STEM Engagement Center to become the grant initiative of the STEM Engagement and Empowerment Center with wrap around services. The grant funded Center's loaner programs (laptops, calculators, and textbooks) served a total of 177 unique students; 144 low income (Pell-eligible) 55.4% Hispanic/Latino. A total of 16 career and graduate school events were hosted, with 135 unique students attending; 72.6% low income 59.2% Hispanic/Latino.

The grant funded tutoring program has been very busy, with over 500 appointments; 81.2% low-income 40% Hispanic/Latino. As one of the main grant initiatives career services is becoming more prominent. The STEM Success Coach now provides academic advising that is career centered, so that first-year students are aware of current and future career opportunities: 51 appointments were made under PODER; 39 low income 30 Hispanic/Latino students. A total of 223 students received STEM academic advisement; 74.4% low-income 53.1% Hispanic/Latino. Therefore, we have clearly serviced our target population. In addition, the grant executive committee approved 16 students to be PODER fellows and work with faculty members on collaborative research projects. The majority of these students are low- income Hispanic/Latino students who would not have this opportunity if it was not for the grant funding. We have a total of 9 faculty members from 5 different STEM departments working with these students.

Thus far, these collaborations have already resulted in 5 different peer-reviewed national research conference presentations. The executive committee also approved equipment upgrades for all STEM departments. The upgrades include items like a flask scrubber glassware washer, calorimeter, melt station, and a 3D printer. All these upgrades will provide our students with hands on career-related experiences previously not available to them.

This is going to be a big summer for grant funded activities. We already have more than 70% of our STEM faculty registered for a week-long faculty development workshop where we have external speakers coming to provide our faculty with innovative STEM pedagogy to improve our teaching. We are in the final stages of developing our grant-funded STEM transfer academy with both the dates and curriculum finalized. This is an opt-out program where all STEM transfer students will be provided with not only information on all our support services, but with career counseling, degree mapping, and a three-credit course to ensure they are at Junior status. We have finalized the dates and plan for our grant funded high school STEM summer camp and have reached out to 25 area high schools to advertise. The space for the hydroponic innovation hub has been selected and the design of the space is completed.

The goal is to have students collaborate with our corporate partner this summer to set up the equipment so that the hydroponic lab is fully functioning by the beginning of the fall semester. Lastly, we will be updating the lecture hall and labs in our science building during the summer, while classes are not in session. This is just a sample of some of the activities that occurred or have been planned during the first six months of the PODER grant.