



# Project Puertas Abiertas

Title V Postbaccalaureate  
PPOHA Grant

In October 2009, Sul Ross State University was awarded a Title V Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans (PPOHA) Grant from the United States Department of Education. The grant began on October 1, 2009 and is for a five-year period. The purpose of Title V PPOHA grants is to improve programs and services at the college through development of new initiatives and improvement of existing ones. SRSU's grant "*Puertas Abiertas*" (Open Doors) is designed to increase not only Hispanic but also low-income students' attainment of graduate degrees and provide new pathways to these degrees for students in our vast region through distance education. Additionally, the project will provide direct support to low-income graduate students through fellowships.

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## Meet our Staff



### Rhonda Austin, Project Director

Rhonda Austin is a Certified Blackboard Trainer and a Certified Online Instructor and has been teaching online and managing grants for the past 8 years. She earned her M.A. in English from Sul Ross in 1998 and has recently moved back to Alpine.

### Pamela Pipes, Graduate Center Developer

Pamela was awarded a Master of Science degree in biology from the University of Texas of the Permian Basin and fully understands the process of thesis development, execution, and submission, especially in the sciences. As a first generation college student herself, she also fully understands the challenges faced by many students in the Sul Ross State University service area.



### Sandy Bogus, Integration Analyst

Sandy's job at Sul Ross under the Title V grant is to make life easier for faculty teaching in the online environment. She has over 12 years experience in designing, developing and implementing curriculum. For the last six years, she has worked with faculty using technology and innovative instructional strategies in an online environment. Her Master's degree is in Instructional Technology.

### Maritza Martinez, Data Tracking Specialist

Maritza received her BA in Communication at Sul Ross State University. She has experience in administrative support working five years with the United States Attorney's Office. She is eager to help with the process of students attaining their education goals.





## Graduate Student Fellowships

Pamela Pipes chairs the Graduate Student Fellowship Committee, which is charged with developing the application, selection, and award processes for graduate student fellowships. These annual fellowships of \$8,000 to \$10,000 each will be available beginning fall 2010 to a minimum of five promising graduate students with unmet financial need. Fellowship information and application materials can be found at [www.sulross.edu/graduates](http://www.sulross.edu/graduates). The application deadline is April 1, 2010.

## Graduate Student Center



*BAB 202 - Future home of Graduate Student Center*



The Graduate Student Center will be equipped with a computer mini-lab and an LCD projector and screen for conducting workshops and assisting graduate students with research, writing, and applying for external aid. Additionally, the Graduate Student Center will have a satellite phone and personal locator beacon available for check-out by students conducting field research in remote areas. The Graduate Student Center will also serve as a centralized location for dissemination of information and delivery of support services for graduate students. Graduate student support services to be developed include:

- Financial literacy workshops
- A directory of available financial aid
- Graduate Orientation program
- Academic skills support services, including thesis research and writing
- Career and educational planning services
- Mentoring program
- Career placement services

## Electronic Graduate Admissions

Project staff, graduate admissions, and the Office of Information Technology will work together to develop a streamlined electronic graduate admissions process that will facilitate enrollment for all our grad students, specifically those at a distance.



## *Distance Education*

The first year Title V objectives include funding to update an Interactive Video classroom in El Paso that supports many of our Distance Ed graduate classes. That process is underway. Updating and replacing outdated equipment will significantly strengthen graduate distance instruction at Sul Ross and meet the need for increased access to more distance learning opportunities and the capacity to deliver them.

## *Online Course Development*

Adapting graduate programs and courses to an online format will expand access to graduate education. The Title V grant will provide faculty with training, release time, equipment, and instructional design support to assist them in converting courses to an online format.

## *Goals and Objectives*

### *Puertas Abiertas goals are:*

**Goal 1:** Expand graduate educational offerings for Hispanic and low-income students through distance delivery of existing high-demand graduate programs;

**Goal 2:** Improve graduation rates (academic attainment) through services that contribute to higher rates of completion; and

**Goal 3:** Increase enrollment of Hispanic and low-income students through more accessible degree programs and through direct financial assistance.

### *Measurable Five-Year Objectives of Puertas Abiertas and Relationship to Goals*

**Objective 1:** By September 2014, graduate enrollment will have increased to 726 (a 25% increase from the baseline of 581 in fall '08).

**Objective 2:** By September 2014, the 3-year graduation rate for the fall '10 cohort will have increased 5% (up to 42% from baseline of 37% for the fall '05 cohort).

**Objective 3:** By September 2014, the number of master's degrees awarded per year by Sul Ross will have increased to 250 (up from a baseline of 146 in fall '08).

Project *Puertas Abiertas* is fully funded by a Dept. of Education Title V HSI grant under the PPOHA (Providing Postbaccalaureate Opportunities to Hispanic Americans) program.