



# RGV FOCUS

*a collaboration with Educate Texas*

## ***Communities united for educational success***

RGV FOCUS is a Collective Impact initiative in the Rio Grande Valley—a group of leaders from school districts, higher education institutions, community-based organizations, and the workforce partnering to improve student lives from cradle-to-career. RGV FOCUS was launched in 2012 to transform college readiness, access, and success across Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy counties. The work to date is driven by the following vision:

*All RGV learners **will achieve** a degree or credential that leads to a **meaningful** career.*

Several compelling forces drove RGV FOCUS to build a guide for advising undocumented students pursuing higher education. First, we knew many undocumented students were unaware of how to approach the college application process and few knew they qualified for state financial aid. Secondly, confusion existed among college access professionals on how to counsel undocumented students. Lastly, in fall of 2014 our community had five different Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) processes and forms, making it difficult for students to navigate an already complicated process. In response to this last concern the financial aid directors of our local institutions of higher education (IHEs) came together to streamline procedures into a single TASFA process and form for the entire RGV. The new process and form were documented and shared with the community via the *RGV FOCUS TASFA Counselor's Toolkit* in January 2015. The current resource expands on that work incorporating portions of the Austin College Access Network's (ACAN) *College Guide for Advising Undocumented Students* which includes guidance on how students should approach the college application process.

We hope that this guide will become a trusted tool for high school counselors and other college access professionals in support of all students seeking higher education.