Project title: *Juntos: Together for a Better Education and Success for At-Risk Youth in Iowa Communities*

**Overall goal:** Assist youth who are at risk of not graduating from high school in developing knowledge and skills and connecting to community resources that will result in the youth graduating from high school and enrolling in higher education.

**Target audience:** Latino and African American youth who are identified by school personnel as at-risk for not graduating from high school. The King and Multon neighborhood area in Des Moines and the city of Muscatine will be the two community sites selected for this project.

**Number of youth directly served:** Each year, 15 eighth grade youth and their parents/primary caregivers in each community site will be invited to participate in the project, for a total of 30 “new” youth participating each year. At the end of the project period, 150 youth (75 at each site) and their parents/primary caregivers will have been served overall in the project. Strong relationships will be nurtured between project staff and the youth and their parents/primary caregivers in order for continuous participation to occur throughout the five year project period.

**Program components to help reach overall goal:**

1) **Local project steering committee** comprised of youth and parents/caregivers who reside in the SCP sites, staff and volunteers of community organizations serving the SCP sites, school personnel (e.g., counselor, administrator) to inform the development and implementation of the project, including strategies to build project sustainability.

2) **A needs and assets assessment and individualized student success plan** for youth participating in the project will be facilitated by an individual hired as a *Success Coach* in each project site. These tools will help guide to academic coaching provided by the Success Coach. During the first two years of youth’s participation in the project (8th and 9th grade), the Success Coach will meet with youth bi-weekly to build a strong relationship, mentor them through difficult situations, help them access resources (e.g., tutoring), engage in extracurricular activities, and provide one-on-one academic coaching (e.g., developing study skills) to help them stay in school. The Success Coach will work closely with community partners, school counselors and administrators, and parents/primary caregivers of youth participating in the project.

3) A six-week, 2 ½ hours/week, *Juntos: Together for a Better Education (TBE) Family Workshop Series and bi-monthly Family Fun Night booster sessions* will be conducted annually involving participating youth and their parents/primary caregivers to help them gain knowledge, skills, and resources needed to help a) youth academically succeed; b) parents/primary caregivers identify ways they can help their youth learn at home; c) effectively communicate with school personnel and other adults who influence their youth’s learning; and d) identify ways to make participating in higher education a realistic family goal. The Family Fun Night booster sessions will help to reinforce knowledge and skills gained as a result of the workshop series, and to further connect families to local resources to help youth academically succeed.

4) **4-H/youth activities focused on helping participating youth strengthen their self-confidence and life skills** (e.g., goal setting, decision-making, leadership, organization, being a team member, communication including writing and speaking skills, conflict
resolution, coping with stress or disappointment, service, financial management, eating healthy, being physically active) that will help them academically succeed will be held bi-weekly at school or at a location (e.g., community center) which is convenient and comfortable for the youth and their families. Utilizing technology to gain and apply life skills will be integrated into project activities. Activities to help youth explore potential career interests will also be implemented. As youth reach 11th grade, specific activities will take place to help youth prepare for successfully completing applications for higher education and scholarships, and taking college entrance exams (e.g., ACT, SAT).

Additionally, older youth (e.g., 10th-12th graders) will transition into volunteer leaders to help organize and facilitate the 4H/Youth activities, as well as assist with the Family Fun nights, and help tutor younger youth (e.g., 8th, 9th graders) in the project.

5) *Juntos: Together for a Better Education (TBE) Youth Summer Academy* – an opportunity for youth participating in the project who are now in 10th grade to gain a sense of life on a college campus by visiting the Iowa State University campus in Ames. During this multi-day experience, youth will tour the campus, experience some of campus life while eating in a dining hall, staying overnight in a residence hall, participate in a college class, and listen to student panel discussions to learn about career opportunities through higher education, what helps students succeed in college, what youth can do in high school to help them succeed in college, as well as a range of other topics to help youth get a sense of what it would be like to go to college. College students, including those who participate in Collegiate 4H, and those who are from the participating project communities, will be invited to share their experiences with youth during the summer academy. Selected faculty, staff and administrators will also be invited to share insights with the youth, including opportunities youth may want to take advantage of in order to help their college experience be as beneficial as possible.
Project Overview

Project staff job descriptions:

Community site program coordinator:

The Program Coordinator will: 1) be responsible for providing overall leadership to the planning and implementation of the following community site project activities: a) Juntos: Together for a Better Education (TBE) 6-week family involvement workshop series for program families, b) monthly family night activities, c) 4-H/youth activities and service learning projects for program youth, c) Summer Academy; 2) identify, recruit and assist in training community volunteers to carry out the previously mentioned project activities; 3) manage project budget and expenses.

Community site success coach:

Success Coaches will: 1) be trained in the 4-H/youth life skill curriculum, the success coaching curriculum, the Juntos: Together for a Better Education (TBE) family involvement workshop curriculum, and technology tools for success; 2) partner with a middle and high school to identify 15 youth annually who are at high risk for not completing high school and recruit them and their parents/caregivers to participate in the program. Latino or African American youth are the focus population for this project; 3) assist Extension staff and volunteers in the 4-H/youth life skills clubs in which the program youth are involved; 4) oversee one-on-one success coaching opportunities and activities for program youth; 5) assist in the planning and implementation of the 6-week Juntos: TBE family involvement workshop series for program families; 6) use technology to help youth and parents/caregivers engage and progress towards their goals; 7) assist in monthly follow-up family nights; 8) maintain regular contact with parents/caregivers and encourage their involvement in their youth’s learning; and 9) help plan for and implement the Summer Academy. Success Coaches will also develop a quarterly student report for every youth, which will help them make a plan to provide the services and support to meet each youth’s particular needs. Success coaches will serve as a “broker” between youth, families and school personnel to help youth achieve academic success and help identify and secure local resources (e.g., in-kind contributions from organizations such as staff time, supplies, meeting locations, equipment) to assist in carrying out project activities.