



BATON ROUGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE USES DATA AS BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

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Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC) welcomed 40 representatives from 11 institutions in the Louisiana Community and Technical College System for the CCPI-STEM Southwest Regional Network's NSF ATE Grant Development Conference in March 2025.

The meeting was incredibly successful, resulting in a number of innovative ideas and outcomes.

It is a model for future CCPI-STEM regional meetings. The spirit of collaboration and openness among all the colleges was critical to the success of the meeting. The other noteworthy aspect of this gathering was the foundation upon which it was built: data. From start to finish, the agenda and the outcomes were informed by data.

As BRCC's grants administrator, I developed and distributed a pre-conference needs assessment in advance of the meeting, to ensure the agenda reflected participants' priorities. Responses revealed both enthusiasm and barriers: while faculty and staff were eager to pursue NSF ATE proposals, they faced constraints around time, staffing capacity, and financial processes. Nearly all also expressed a desire for stronger connections with colleagues and mentors, signaling high demand for collaboration and peer learning. These insights shaped the meeting's structure, guiding discussions and breakout sessions to focus on the real obstacles that colleges face. They also provided a roadmap for future initiatives and statewide collaboration.

From Ideas to Action with Data

With this groundwork in place, Dr. Jennifer Wimbish, chair of the CCPI-STEM Southwest Regional Network, led participants through Compression Planning, a structured process that identified three priorities: industry-driven credentials, stronger workforce partnerships, and statewide project management tools.

Discussion questions I developed to guide breakout sessions resulted in colleges sharing promising strategies such as proposal request forms, standardized budget templates, and boilerplate language.

The local focus was enriched by a national perspective. Shane Kirby, Director of Advancement Partnerships at Columbus State Community College, joined virtually to share lessons from Ohio's regional ATE collaborations. His remarks connected Louisiana's efforts to a larger national movement. Integration of pre- and post-conference surveys have created a continuous feedback cycle of meaningful dialogue and planning.

Building for the Future

Perhaps the most significant outcome was the commitment to launch a system-wide Grants Administrators Group to coordinate priorities, share resources, and foster collaboration across LCTCS. Combined with quarterly ATE support sessions, shared templates, and a collaboration tracker, this initiative will lay the groundwork for sustained statewide capacity building.

When vision is paired with perspective, when outcomes are anchored in data, and when evidence is translated into design, collaboration moves beyond aspiration and becomes action. This convening showed that when community colleges ground their work in data and collective problem-solving, the impact extends far beyond one workshop. It is now the foundation for a statewide culture of grant collaboration.

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