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## Allies in Education

A Profile of:

**Tenneco/Jefferson Davis Business  
School Partnership  
Houston, Texas**

by Jennifer L. Tyler and David Gruber

September 1987

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Tenneco, Inc., located in Houston, Texas, is one of the nation's major conglomerates whose international operations include hotels, real estate and shipbuilding in addition to oil and energy services. Jefferson Davis High School had one of the worst reputations in Houston for attendance, achievement and morale. The perhaps unlikely pairing of the two originated in 1981 with an approach to Tenneco by Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS), an agency affiliated with the Houston Independent School District. With extensive experience in community service, Tenneco's own Volunteers In Assistance began the partnership by providing teaching support to the faculty and tutoring for the students of Jefferson Davis.

Tenneco has since expanded its scope of activities to include the Summer Jobs/Training Program. This component of the partnership is operated by Communities In Schools (CIS), a program modeled after the national Cities In Schools program that provides jobs, training and counseling to at-risk youth. The partnership is funded by Tenneco, whose promise to fund 100 summer jobs for students carried considerable weight in the decision to bring CIS into Jefferson Davis High School to manage the Summer Jobs/Training Program.

The overall goal of the partnership is to help upgrade the quality of education and to better prepare students to assume more productive roles as workers and citizens. Key features of this program and other partnership features include the following:

- o A year-long course (40 hours) in preemployment training which meets twice a week after school;
- o The placement of 100 students in seven-week summer jobs in nonprofit organizations, with each Friday reserved for in-school enrichment activities with CIS personnel;
- o A requirement that participating students complete 20 hours of community volunteer work;
- o The availability of CIS counselors to assist students with problems that might be interfering with their academic lives;
- o The tutoring of students by approximately 25 Tenneco employees once or twice a week in subjects of the volunteers' own choosing; and

- o The matching of 101 students with Tenneco volunteer mentors to give career guidance and act as role models during the seven-week summer jobs program.

The Tenneco/Jefferson Davis High School partnership was chosen for inclusion in the P/PV study of school/business collaborations for two reasons. The partnership has received national publicity and recognition as an example of the "adopt-a-school" model, and has continued to grow and expand. It was also a partnership designed to target disadvantaged youth: Tenneco had specifically requested to be paired with a school that was located in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood and that had low levels of attendance and achievement. Jefferson Davis High, with a population of over 1,300 students, fit all of Tenneco's requirements.

This profile begins by describing the partnership's context and history. It continues with a description of the structure and operation of the various partnership components. The profile concludes with a summary of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the partnership, along with implications for school/-business collaborations in general.

The profile was compiled by two members of the school/business collaboration research team who visited Houston for two days in the spring of 1986. During that time, they conducted interviews with program operators, teachers, volunteers and students; visited classes and observed other program activities. Program materials provided by the staff of Tenneco and VIPS were also reviewed.

## II. HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The history of the Tenneco/Jefferson Davis partnership is part of the broader history of school/business partnerships in Houston. Tenneco, an energy services company with a diversified range of interests, has been involved in a wide variety of closely-related partnership efforts. These include citywide initiatives in cooperation with Houston schools, corporate sponsorship of a separate program known as Communities in Schools (CIS), and the partnership with Jefferson Davis High School. This chapter will discuss these efforts while considering the context in which partnerships developed and the history and implementation of major partnership programs. Although the chapter will present an overview of all partnership activities, its major emphasis is on the development of the Tenneco/Jefferson Davis link and the roles played by the school district, corporation and high school. The section concludes with a summary of the partnership as it was originally implemented and as it has been refined.

### ORIGINS

Partnerships in the city began in 1980, at a time when there was considerable concern in the business community over the state of Houston schools. This concern had been building for some time, and was directly related to the decision to desegregate the schools.

As in many other cities, whites began abandoning the school system in the 1970s, leading to an increasing perception that public schools in the city were part of a substandard system delivering inadequate services to a largely minority population. By 1980, the schools--40 percent black, 40 percent white, 17 percent Hispanic and 3 percent Asian--were seen as producing graduates who could neither read nor write and were virtually unemployable even in the booming Houston economy. There was an additional perception, apparently widespread, that teachers were incompetent, working in schools because they could find no other employment.

As a response to this declining image, the school district established a magnet school program and opened its first magnet school in 1976. Magnets were intended to serve as both a mechanism for desegregation and a way to revitalize the reputation of the system. Although the district had tried to increase public involvement in the schools with the creation of the Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) office in 1970, the following 10 years saw no major effort to involve the business community in the system.

Business partnerships came about not through the direct efforts of the school district, but rather through a variety of outside

organizations and committees. Three of these, in particular, played a role in partnership efforts: a volunteer committee of parents headed by a local activist, Sandy Sawyer; a nonprofit organization known as Child Care '76; and a group called the Houston Business Committee for Education.

Business partnerships began as a result of the efforts of Sawyer's committee of parents. Meeting with Superintendent Bill Reagan in 1980, Sawyer proposed business partnerships as a means to revitalize the schools and harness the unrealized potential of the business community. Reagan immediately offered support for the idea, seeing in the proposed partnerships a way to infuse resources into the newly created magnet schools, and a means to gain political support for two initiatives current that year--a bond issue and major education bills then before the legislature. The school district did not see partnerships as a way to bring more money into the schools. Houston's increasingly strong tax base adequately met most of the district's short-term needs.

The business community, too, was eager to enter into partnership projects. The "disaster" perception of the schools common in 1980 led business to worry about the image of their city, the quality of future employees and, as one observer noted, "the safety of the streets." An additional motivation, once partnerships had begun, was the need to keep up with corporate leaders who were already participating. Early activity by IBM, and major oil companies such as Shell and Tenneco put strong pressure on competitor organizations to participate.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

Partnerships formally began when Superintendent Reagan approached the business community through the Chamber of Commerce with a proposal for increased school involvement. The VIPS office was charged with developing and maintaining partnership efforts. But business came to play the central role in the partnership, initiating the partnership effort with a Chamber of Commerce kickoff reception. IBM, in particular, was a prime sponsor of this new effort. The reception garnered broad support from representatives of virtually all major Houston corporations; as one participant put it: "A whole lot of vice presidents came." Attracting 60 corporate guests, the kickoff resulted in the creation of 17 partnerships concentrated largely in the magnet schools.

During the next several years, the partnership effort grew, expanding in 1982 to 42 schools; in 1983 to 88. In that year, another kickoff dinner was held with 102 people attending. By 1985, a total of 150 businesses and organizations were working with students in 102 schools.

In an effort related to partnerships and educational improvement, a separate task force known as the Houston Business Committee for Educational Excellence was established in 1985. The task force, composed of mid-level corporate staff, originated in a "task force for excellence" set up by the superintendent to assess teachers. Participation stemmed from the perception that Houston teachers were drawn from "the lowest 25 percent" and that poor teaching would in turn hurt the image, business environment and quality of life in Houston. The committee, including representatives from ARCO, Tenneco, Shell and IBM among others, decided to upgrade the teaching profession through grants to teachers, summer training programs and a reward system for notable teachers. The committee has considerable funding from ARCO (\$50,000) and Tenneco (\$10,000) and is just starting to select staff and an office.

#### SCHOOL DISTRICT ROLE

Although the school district played an important role as an intermediary in partnership formation, it did not initiate or ultimately direct the shape of individual partnerships. Major school/business links were built on the efforts of volunteer committees concerned with the apparent failure of the schools to educate and prepare students for employment or productive citizenship. The school district response was to establish a brokerage mechanism that introduced voluntary organizations and the business community to the school system and provided some suggested models for a partnership structure. The school district then withdrew to leave the major initiative to the business community.

Throughout the partnership effort, the schools have used the business community's executive talent to an unusual degree, allowing the public/community affairs officers from five or six major corporations--including ARCO, IBM and Shell--to determine the context, structure, funding and agendas for school/business linkages. The high degree of business involvement, evident from the first fundraising dinner, reflects Houston's traditional private sector involvement in public and community affairs.

#### TENNECO ROLE

The Tenneco Corporation, like some other major oil companies, is a major underwriter of Houston's cultural activities. It is also a major supporter of the city's nonprofit sector, providing aid to over 140 organizations including the Red Cross, hospitals, arts organizations and community centers.

Tenneco has also been an active promoter of educational improvements. Tenneco's activities in support of community projects in

general, and education in particular, is coordinated by its Office of Community Affairs, under the direction of Jo Ann Swinney. Swinney feels that Tenneco, as well as other major corporations, needs to be involved directly in the schools in order to accomplish four main goals:

- o Improve the academic performance of students;
- o Provide students with role models in the business world;
- o Improve in-school morale; and
- o Increase the business community's understanding of and involvement in the public school system.

One effort in which Tenneco has been strongly involved is Communities In Schools (CIS), a Houston-based program that brings the services of existing social service agencies to disadvantaged students to aid in dropout prevention. The program provides students with access to these agencies and offers in-school counseling, tutoring and employment services. In each participating school, CIS counselors monitor student schoolwork and attendance, plan programs and place students with nonprofit corporations.

CIS is based on a national program, Cities In Schools, which began in Atlanta. The Houston CIS effort is, however, a separate one, initiated by Jill Shaw, who as a representative of an organization known as Child Care '76, approached Superintendent Reagan directly with the concept. Reagan became a strong supporter, and as a result, CIS operates in 13 schools in the greater Houston area. Preemployment training is provided in nine high schools, but the additional employment component is only offered in two of these high schools. Programs in several of the schools focus on the needs of juveniles on probation.

Tenneco's involvement in CIS has been extensive. Shaw first enlisted the corporation's support in 1980, and Tenneco responded by providing general program support.

#### THE TENNECO/JEFFERSON DAVIS PARTNERSHIP

The partnership between Tenneco and Jefferson Davis High School was initiated by Terry Chauche, coordinator of Volunteers In Public Schools (VIPS) for the school district. Aware of Tenneco's interest in education, Chauche approached Swinney in the corporation's Office of Community Affairs with a list of magnet schools from which Tenneco could select a partner. Tenneco declined to choose any of them, and instead expressed interest in a school with the following characteristics: low achievement

among the students and a downtown location in a Hispanic neighborhood. Jefferson Davis fit the requirements. The choice of Jefferson Davis reflected Tenneco's desire to have an impact on public education in Houston and to use the partnership to increase the visibility of Tenneco in the community.

The principal of Jefferson Davis, George Diaz, was receptive to the partnership idea when approached in December, 1980. Diaz felt that a partnership with Tenneco could bring the school a variety of benefits, including an improved image in the community, improved student and teacher morale, and assistance for teachers.

Diaz saw some material advantages as well. Noting that a "huge corporation could help a school like this," Diaz recognized that a corporate linkage, like adoption by a rich uncle, could bring a wide variety of long-term material benefits including direct cash grants, property improvements and jobs for school graduates.

The first planning meeting for the partnership was held in February 1981. It was attended by principal Diaz, the PTA president, a teacher, Swinney and Mike Kovich, a lawyer for Tenneco. Subsequently, planning committees were set up to shape the proposed partnership. These committees decided to focus the program on providing Tenneco volunteers to aid teachers, a model suggested by the school district partnership coordinator.

This partnership model faced some initial resentment from teachers, who reportedly felt their competence was being questioned. In part to ease tensions and in part to promote partnership and school goals, a retreat was held in the summer of 1981 at a Tenneco-owned conference center at Columbus Lakes. Forty-five faculty members, the principal, two assistant principals and a school district representative attended. The conference concentrated on program planning and morale building and reportedly did much to help the partnership program gain acceptance among teachers. Operations began the following year with five Tenneco volunteers in the school.

A few problems, which have continued to hamper partnership efforts, were immediately evident: not all volunteers who had signed up followed through and a number could not or did not come to the school on a consistent basis. In the most recent school year, only 10 to 15 participated consistently. Despite some problems of this kind, the partnership has functioned relatively smoothly. In 1985 a second conference of teachers, principals and district officials was held to plan how to meet school district objectives.

Tenneco's affiliation with Jefferson Davis led Swinney to press for a CIS program there; it was implemented in 1983. The corporation brought the program into Jefferson Davis (though the

high school had not been slated as a CIS site), and has provided both program direction and substantial financial support. Tenneco underwrites 100 student jobs each year and funds a four-day "Leadership Institute" for program participants. Day-to-day program operations are directed by CIS staff at Jefferson Davis. However, through the involvement of Swinney and Community Affairs Representative, Renee Ramey, Tenneco exerts strong overall guidance for program planning. Tenneco has also committed extensive funding to the program, contributing an estimated \$375,000 over the three years of CIS operation at Jefferson Davis.

Throughout the history of the partnership, Tenneco has taken a leading role, working with school officials to achieve its long-term goals and to respond to school requests for assistance. All funding for the partnership--including costs of planning, operation, incidental programming and school improvements--has been provided by Tenneco.

#### THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL

In developing partnerships in Houston, no specific model was mandated. Rather, a variety of treatments including tutoring assistance, mentoring programs, job placements, incentive awards and other initiatives were selected in each partnership. Tenneco's efforts have reflected this mix; the partnership has evolved into a group of flexible components of which some are continuing programs, while others are one-time responses to a particular problem. Apart from the CIS component, the focus of the Tenneco/Jefferson Davis partnership has been on meeting school needs rather than needs of individual students. The emphasis has been to improve the general teaching and learning conditions within the school through tutoring assistance, cash contributions and attempts to improve morale and a sense of belonging within the school.

The one exception to this focus on school rather than individual student needs has been the CIS component. This program, which offers subsidized summer job placements, counseling and some preemployment training, is designed as a means to motivate and support high-risk students who are likely to drop out of school. The aim of the program is to act as a "shield" for youngsters without structure and direction in their lives, to provide guidance, social services, part-time jobs and eventual job search assistance as part of a full-time program. The structure and management of the partnership components are described in the next chapter.

### III. THE PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

The Tenneco/Jefferson Davis partnership program has three major components:

- o A year-long course in job readiness and preemployment skills which includes after-school classes, community volunteer work, a seven-week summer jobs program and the matching of students with volunteer mentors;
- o A year-long volunteer tutor program that places Tenneco employees in the classroom to assist teachers and provide individual or small group attention to students in a wide range of subjects; and
- o An ongoing program of Tenneco-sponsored special events and services aimed at boosting teacher morale, student achievement and attendance, and overall school spirit.

With the exception of the seven-week summer jobs component, partnership activities are designed to operate throughout the school year. While some are scheduled two or three times a week and others are one-time special events, Tenneco's involvement in the school is continuous, either visibly or behind the scenes.

Despite drastic cuts in the corporate contributions budget, Tenneco management has been encouraged by its Office of Community Affairs to continue placing its school partnership high on its list of priorities. It has cut back only on expenses considered "excessive". Virtually all costs for the partnership program are paid by Tenneco. Tenneco's contributions have included, over the four years of the partnership, \$375,000 to fund the Communities in Schools program at Jefferson Davis including job subsidies, staff and administrative costs and \$250,000 in other partnership costs. These include:

- o \$20,000/year in scholarships;
- o One full-time equivalent employee;
- o Additional staff time;
- o Incentive awards;
- o \$25,000 for the Leadership Institute;
- o Two retreats for Davis staff; and
- o Renovations to the schools.

Tenneco's overall contribution to the school represents an additional 4 percent to the school's total per-pupil expenditure. Such a contribution provides the principal with much-needed resources for the school, often funding projects that otherwise

would not occur or would have to be paid for out of an already overtaxed budget.

Partnership activities are administered out of the Office of Community Affairs at Tenneco. Renee Ramey, a full-time Community Affairs Representative and former tutor, coordinates all tutoring and special activities with a representative at the school, currently the Dean of Instruction; all summer jobs and pre-employment activities are coordinated by Ramey with the School Director of CIS, Helen Coronado. A former graduate of Jefferson Davis High, Coronado is assisted by four counselors and a secretary in the management of all jobs/training program activities. The work of CIS in Jefferson Davis has been hampered by its frequent staff turnover causing some discontinuity in services to students.

#### SUMMER JOBS/TRAINING PROGRAM

The program is designed to help at-risk, disadvantaged youth understand and develop the attitudes, habits and skills necessary for effective full-time employment. The combination of classroom training, counseling and on-the-job supervision during employment with a nonprofit organization for the summer is intended to prepare the student for the world of work beyond high school.

#### After-School Classes

Funded by Tenneco, Communities in Schools (CIS) administers the year-long course in job readiness and preemployment skills training. The CIS staff recruit the students, with input from teachers and administrators, targeting students at risk of dropping out of school due to academic, financial, family or legal problems.

CIS staff also develop the curriculum for the after-school program. A total of 40 classroom hours are required for all students who plan to seek summer employment through the CIS program. The curriculum includes workshops on topics in four major categories:

- o Academic Preparation:
  - College preparation
  - Writing
  - Test-taking
  - Study skills
  - Grammar
  - Communication
- o Personal/Social Development:
  - Self-assessment
  - Personal hygiene

- Managing personal responsibility/problem-solving
  - Body language
  - Dependability/reliability
  - Time management
  - Motivation
  - Personal relations
  - Community service
- o Career Development:
    - Career awareness
    - Resume writing
    - Career panel
    - Job search and contact skills
    - Interviewing
    - Problem-solving/coping
    - Initiative and productivity
    - Worker rights
  - o Enrichment:
    - Broyhill Leadership Conference
    - Six Flags Over Texas
    - Wax Museum

Each workshop has seven to eight lessons that last for an hour. Students receive both pre- and post-tests for each of the first three groups of workshops.

#### Community Volunteer Work

In addition to the 40 hours of preemployment training, 20 hours of community volunteer work are required to successfully complete the program. Students take part in a series of Community Service Projects aimed at teaching cooperation and self-help through contributions to their own communities. One such project provided assistance and companionship to "adopted" local senior citizens; another involved cleaning up an inner-city neighborhood; a third landscaped neighborhood apartment complexes.

#### Summer Jobs

The preemployment training program culminates in an interview day at Jefferson Davis High during which employers from nonprofit organizations and students are brought together and efforts are made to match the preferences of each. Most students are placed with their first, second or third choice of employer. Nonprofit organizations, such as educational institutions, municipal government, libraries and hospitals, are recruited by Tenneco, which pays the minimum wage stipends for the seven weeks. The students actually work four days a week and return to school on Fridays in order to discuss their work experiences and to

participate in enrichment activities with CIS personnel. Students are also paid for this Friday attendance.

The promise of free summer help, paid for by Tenneco, attracted 44 work sites for the 1984-85 program year, with most organizations taking one to four students each. Texas Southern University took 12 students. Appendix A presents a complete list of participating organizations.

Prior to the start of employment, both students and supervisors are provided with manuals detailing expectations, regulations and procedures to be followed during the course of the working relationship. In addition, each is given the opportunity to evaluate the experience upon the completion of the seven-week period. CIS staff visit the work sites to monitor student progress. Three or more absences is cause for dismissal. This action may only be taken by CIS staff. CIS may also drop an organization or agency from the program "if good cause is found", i.e., a lack of compliance with previously established worksite guidelines.

The distribution of students by occupational type in the summer of 1985 was:

- o Clerical.....89%
- o Trade.....4%
- o Paraprofessional...4%
- o Other.....3%

A complete list of the type of entry-level positions filled during the past three years of the program may be found in Appendix B.

Prior to beginning their summer employment, students attended a week-long leadership conference at Prairie View A. & M. College. Modeled after the Broyhill Leadership Conference concept, the conference was funded wholly by Tenneco. Students stayed in the dormitories and attended classes. The curriculum was designed by the Tomorrow's America Foundation and was approved by the Houston Independent School District. Training in the following areas was provided:

- o Goal-setting
- o Organization
- o Leadership
- o Problem-solving
- o Active communication
- o Group dynamics
- o Self-discovery

Due to current depressed economic conditions, Tenneco recently moved the leadership conference to the downtown campus of the

University of Houston to eliminate the expense of a residential setting, much to the disappointment of students who had delighted in the vacation-like experience.

#### TENNECO VOLUNTEERS: TUTORS AND MENTORS

##### Tutors

The recruitment of Tenneco volunteers to tutor at Jefferson Davis is the responsibility of Renee Ramey. Regular advertising campaigns are conducted to enlist new volunteers and renew existing commitments. Great care is taken by the principal, however, in matching teachers with tutors. According to Diaz, tutoring is viewed as the "greatest boon" to the school: while the Tenneco/CIS Summer jobs/Training Program affects some students, "volunteers affect the whole school."

The 1981 summer faculty retreat, designed to win acceptance for partnership activities in general and in-class tutors in particular, was repeated last year at a cost of \$25 per teacher. The fee is seen as a way of defraying costs during difficult times for Tenneco and as a device for helping teachers feel it is "their" conference. As the number of tutors continues to increase--from five in 1981 to an average of 25 in more recent years--more teachers have the option of enlisting outside help for their students. Plans for a third summer retreat are currently underway.

The volunteers act as teacher's aides and provide individual or group tutoring to the students. Volunteers obtain work-release time for this activity and are able to select their preferred subject of interest or expertise. Tenneco provides taxi vouchers for all volunteers to facilitate travel to and from the school, located approximately 15 minutes from the Tenneco building.

Tenneco employees tutor students for one or two hours per week. Recently, Tenneco has laid off some employees because of depressed industry conditions. Volunteers have limited their time in the school because they do not wish to appear to have too much extra time on their hands. Employees may tutor individuals or groups of students but are not permitted to teach the class. Upon signing up as a tutor, each volunteer is given an orientation and a package of materials containing useful guidelines for tutoring activities and appropriate tutor/student roles.

##### Mentors

Mentors are recruited by Tenneco from all departments and levels of expertise within the organization. Over 100 employees are

then matched with students in the summer jobs program who express compatible interests, hobbies, and career goals.

The program has recently expanded its scope of activities. What began as a one-day field trip to Tenneco combined with a summer worksite (check-up) visit has now expanded; in a minimum of three additional planned activities, Tenneco volunteer mentors offer career guidance to the students with whom they are paired. A few students have obtained part-time jobs at Tenneco through the efforts of their mentors.

#### SPECIAL EVENTS AND INCENTIVES

Tenneco's support of Jefferson Davis High School continues beyond the partnership components described above. Its involvement includes various special activities designed to improve school spirit and morale for both faculty and students. Some of the most important of these contributions are as follows:

- o Tenneco has for the past four years awarded renewable college scholarships each worth \$2,500 a year for two Jefferson Davis graduates who wish to study science, technology or business at any college or university in the country. In addition, five students who enroll in the Summer jobs/Training Program and wish to attend Houston Community College are selected to work there during the summer following graduation and, upon enrollment in the fall, are awarded \$500 scholarships for the first year.
- o Tenneco paid for new carpeting for the school auditorium at an estimated cost of \$5,000. It also provided new rifles for the school's ROTC drill team.
- o Tenneco has for the past two years sponsored various schoolwide contests during October, the month when districtwide attendance rates are compared. In 1985, Jefferson Davis received a district award of \$24,500 for instructional materials, based upon its improved attendance rates. Perfect attendance is also recognized at Tenneco-sponsored events, such as this year's picnic honoring students achieving both good attendance and/or good grades.
- o Tenneco volunteers are able to request grants of up to \$1,000 for the teachers with whom they work. These grants enable teachers to purchase classroom materials the school is unable to

provide. Ten grants have been awarded during the past five years.

- o Tenneco sponsored a campus beautification project, supplying plants, trees and mulch and enlisting the help of 200-300 students one Saturday to clean up the grounds. This effort has been greatly aided by district development funds used to dramatically improve both the exterior and interior appearance of the school.
- o Twice during the year, Tenneco honors those who have been selected as teacher of the month with luncheons held in its executive dining room; in addition, the volunteer of the year is recognized.
- o To generate school spirit, Tenneco sponsored a 60th birthday party for Jefferson Davis at a cost of \$15,000. The celebration drew over 11,000 people during the week-long festivities, and all graduating classes were represented. To commemorate the occasion, the alumni established a \$10,000 scholarship fund for college-bound seniors at Jefferson Davis High.
- o Tenneco also prints the school newspaper and football and baseball game programs. It also sponsors field trips for vocational and academic students to Tenneco's corporate headquarters and provides monetary rewards for winners of student literary and art contests.

These are just some of the activities that are sponsored and supported by Tenneco. The corporation's presence and interest in the school is highly visible: announcements for Tenneco-sponsored activities are made over the public address system, posters advertising special events are displayed on bulletin boards around the school, and new bumper stickers sporting Jefferson Davis colors and logo announce that "Tenneco and Jefferson Davis are True Partners in Education."

#### IV. NATURE OF YOUTH SERVED

The whole student body at Jefferson Davis High is affected by the partnership efforts of Tenneco. Tutors come in contact with many students on a weekly basis and the improved environment is, in part, the result of other Tenneco-sponsored activities. However, those students participating in the Summer Jobs/Training Program probably reap the greatest benefits. And since the program targets severely disadvantaged and at-risk youth, these are the students with perhaps the most to gain.

##### SUMMER JOBS/TRAINING PROGRAM

Students are recruited into the jobs program through various channels: letters announcing the program are mailed out by the CIS staff to counselors and students. Teachers and Tenneco volunteers also make recommendations to the CIS staff, identifying students at risk of dropping out of school due to poor attendance and/or grades, financial and other family or legal problems. All applicants have to be approved by the principal prior to acceptance into the program. An average of 130 students sign up annually for preemployment training, exceeding the goal of 106 set by CIS staff for Tenneco-funded summer jobs slots.

While seniors participate in the year-long preemployment workshops, those with several years of program experience are expected to obtain their own private sector jobs for the summer. In the event that they are unable to do so, JTPA certification and employment services are sought.

The recruitment process is hampered by the fact that while the school serves a large proportion of economically disadvantaged youth, many will not admit to needing financial help, thus making it difficult to identify those most in need. For example, Principal Diaz noted that while one-third of all students take advantage of the free lunch program, the vast majority are probably eligible to do so but will go without eating rather than come forward and admit need. He believes such behavior to reflect the pride characteristic of Hispanic families.

In attempts to attract disadvantaged/JTPA-eligible students into the program, CIS offers a \$50 savings bond to each student, and pays teachers \$30 for each JTPA-eligible student referred to the program. Even with these incentives, the CIS staff has difficulty identifying and attracting JTPA-eligible students. The problem is further compounded by a) the need for many of these students to work after school, the time at which most training activities occur, and b) the problem raised by unavailable or expensive public transportation should school buses be missed.

Despite such roadblocks, 129 students with grades ranging from A to F were enrolled at the time of the evaluation and attended regular meetings twice a week after school. Both school attendance and program attendance are strictly enforced. Termination from the program follows an initial warning for unexcused absenteeism. While it is hoped that all grades will improve as a result of improved attendance, emphasis is placed on being in school and passing major subjects. An average of 100 students are then carried over into the Tenneco-sponsored summer jobs program. The characteristics of the students participating in the program in 1985 were:

- o Male.....44%
- o Female.....56%
  
- o Black.....43%
- o Hispanic.....57%
  
- o 9th grade.....21%
- o 10th grade.....38%
- o 11th grade.....23%
- o 12th grade.....17%

#### TENNECO VOLUNTEERS

Students from all grades in this predominantly minority high school are exposed to Tenneco tutors on a fairly regular basis. In classes ranging from Bio/Physics to Special Education Math, students benefit from the one-on-one or small group instruction as the tutor assists the regular classroom teacher. Mentors also serve a wide range of students; Tenneco reports "a good balance between high achievers, average students and low achievers" matched with mentors from many departments.

## V. OUTCOMES

The effects of the Tenneco/Jefferson Davis partnership appear to be positive for the students and the school as a whole. Attendance rates and achievement scores have improved. Morale is high among administrators, teachers and students; the sporting of school colors, bumper stickers and Jefferson Davis T-shirts indicate a sense of ownership of the school, as does the revived interest in athletic competition. In addition, Tenneco's highly visible support of the school has been contagious; the school district has recently completed long-needed renovations at the school and the building appears bright and attractive. A small proportion of the student body also receives preemployment training and work experience from the summer jobs/training program component.

### MORALE

The presence of Tenneco tutors in the school acts as a constant reminder to students of the connection between the worlds of business and education. The volunteers themselves report very positive feelings about the contribution they believe they are making. Teacher morale is also reported improved, though tutors reported that teachers most in need of help were not necessarily those receiving it. Tutors said they were often assigned to a teacher as a reward for hard work and success rather than to support a teacher struggling to function effectively. And community support for the school is apparent, according to Principal Diaz, perhaps as a result of the improved outward appearance of the school.

The lack of parental involvement continues to be a major disappointment. An example was the poor turnout for "fail safe day," a day for parents to meet teachers and learn more about the school. Of the 1,300 parents that could have attended, only 200 actually visited the school. It is, of course, not known how much conflicts with daily work obligations contributed to the poor showing. Diaz, however, clearly viewed the turnout as light and indicative of parental disinterest and/or lack of concern.

Principal Diaz has himself contributed to the improved in-school environment. During the eight years of his tenure, he has enforced a strict discipline code, particularly with regards to drugs and weapons.

### SUMMER JOBS

The most tangible of the collaboration's outcomes for students is summer jobs; 103 youth were placed during the summer of 1985. A

recent evaluation by Communities in Schools' Department of Program Evaluation reported that four out of the six Tenneco/CIS objectives of the Youth Summer Jobs Program had been met:

- o Over 90 percent of the students placed in summer jobs completed the term of employment;
- o Over 85 percent of students placed in summer employment received a satisfactory or better rating from their employers;
- o Over 85 percent of supervisors indicated a willingness to rehire their students and rated the project good or better;
- o Over 85 percent of the students rated their overall training and work experience good or better.

The two unmet objectives were:

- o 25 percent of participating students actually received merit increases based on job performance. This was considerably less than the goal of 80 percent. Eighty-four percent of employers, however, stated that they would recommend their student/employee for "exemplary job performance" awards, distributed at a ceremony during the final week of employment.
- o 74 percent of participating students completed a minimum of 40 hours of preemployment skills training; the goal was 80 percent.

Thus participating students receive positive reinforcement for good attendance and good grades. And with a gain in average daily attendance from 80-83 percent in 1978 to 94.5 percent in 1986, Jefferson Davis students appear to be reversing an earlier trend of increased absenteeism.

#### ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Test scores have improved citywide since the beginning of this decade. Since 1980, the percentage of students passing Houston Independent School District performance tests has increased in 25 high schools and decreased in only two, with 8 percent more students throughout the city passing. While Jefferson Davis experienced a slightly lower increase, 6 percent more students passing, 1984-1985 scores placed Jefferson Davis 18th out of a total of 27 high schools. This compares favorably with 1980 when similar standardized tests had found only two 10th grades, one

11th grade, and four 12th grades scoring lower than Jefferson Davis High districtwide. Progress in this area therefore appears solid, with indications that test scores for the current academic year will herald Jefferson Davis as the most improved high school in the Houston Independent School District. The extent to which this improvement is related to partnership activities, however, cannot be measured. On the other hand, credit is due to the corporation for the students who have received Tenneco scholarships to attend institutions of higher learning.

#### NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR TENNECO

Tenneco's rationale for the partnership was to become a "good corporate citizen," to help integrate youth into the mainstream of society so that they might become productive citizens. Although image-building was not a goal, the partnership has received a good deal of attention, more national than local. For two consecutive years, Tenneco was one of 30 national recipients of the President's Citation Program for Private Sector Initiatives. Tenneco's Summer Jobs/Training Program was judged one of 30 outstanding programs from more than 1,000 entries. In 1985, this program also received an award for "Outstanding Dedication to the Career Development of the Youth of Our Nation" from the President's Private Sector Summer Jobs Citation Program.

## VI. PROGRAM STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL/BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

The Tenneco/Jefferson Davis partnership is one that reflects well on both the school and business participants. Its greatest strength has been the depth of commitment of both Tenneco and Jefferson Davis to the partnership, and the presence of strong, thoughtful advocates in both organizations. Tenneco, in particular, has been noteworthy both in its corporate generosity and in the innovative leadership provided by its Community Affairs Department. Similarly, Jefferson Davis is fortunate to have a principal who does not fear outside influence.

Among the program's strengths are:

- o Tenneco's financial commitment. Despite a recession in the oil industry, Tenneco has continued to contribute substantially to the partnership, averaging over \$100,000 per year for each year of operation.
- o Innovation. The Tenneco partnership has exhibited a number of imaginative solutions to operating problems. Tenneco's sponsorship of retreats for school staff did much to ease initial difficulties while corporate underwriting of the Tomorrow's Institute program proved a unique and effective means to motivate CIS participants.
- o Evolution. The partnership has continued to evolve in response both to existing problems and to new opportunities and needs.
- o Personal commitment and leadership. Jo Ann Swinney and Renee Ramey of Tenneco and George Diaz of Jefferson Davis have all exhibited a high degree of involvement in partnership activities. Swinney and Ramey have been both directive and responsive. They have offered new ideas, met specific school needs and provided strong personal support to the partnership.
- o Improved school morale. The donning of school colors and T-shirts and revived interest in athletic competition are indicative of a new spirit of ownership within the school.

While the concept and direction of the program are quite strong, there have been some deficiencies in operation. The major weaknesses of the partnership have been a loose operating struc-

ture and specific problems in the administration of the CIS component. A less definable weakness lies in program outcomes. Given all the money, attention and care devoted to the CIS component, provisions for transition to post-school employment seem relatively weak.

Specific problem areas include:

- o CIS operation. The CIS component has had administrative difficulties, including high staff turnover and a failure to consistently meet the academic and attendance standards set for student participation. Recruitment, too, has been a problem, with many of the relatively more disadvantaged students remaining unserved.
- o School-to-work transition. While scholarships are offered to some students, and others do get jobs from their placements, the partnership appears to do relatively little to support the school-to-work transition. This difficulty may well stem from the Tenneco policy of using nonprofit organizations in which to place students. While this procedure serves Tenneco's goals of subsidizing participating organizations, it also limits the chances for future employment of participants. Private sector placements, if feasible, would offer students valuable training, contacts and opportunities that precariously funded and staffed nonprofit organization simply cannot match. Although use of corporate placements would represent a change in Tenneco policy, it is a switch that might better meet ultimate partnership goals.
- o Commitment of Tenneco volunteers. Tenneco staff have had some difficulty fulfilling their teaching commitments. Of 30 volunteers signed up to tutor, only 10 to 15 were participating fully at the time of the evaluation. Scheduling, job changes and unexpected job demands have created further problems with the volunteer tutoring program.
- o Volatility of the oil industry. Although Tenneco has maintained its commitment in the face of a sharp drop in revenues and increased staff layoffs, continuing price declines could threaten the partnership. Some effects are already evident, including a scaling down of plans for a motivational/leadership retreat, and the re-

assignment or impending layoff of some teacher volunteers.

The Tenneco/Jefferson Davis Partnership continues to offer both students and staff a mechanism for improving morale and identifying with the school. The Summer Jobs/Training Program provides students a vehicle for gaining important self-confidence, motivation, and entry-level job experience. Thus, Tenneco's association with the school, while possibly capable of contributing greater access to private-sector jobs, has been a positive influence in the recent history of Jefferson Davis High School.

As such, this partnership is an example of a successful corporate "adoption" of partner schools. In the more effective of these relationships, as in this one, benefits to both parties are usually manifested in improvements not easily measured, such as morale and corporate image. The Tenneco effort serves as a model for other corporations as it effectively mobilizes resources to fulfill corporate goals for community relations and bring important benefits to the partner school.

There are, however, significant costs and other disadvantages associated with an adoption approach of this kind. In the most successful of these models, corporate commitment of resources, staff time and energy is high. An effective partnership requires the nearly full-time attention of the community affairs office, as well as placing occasional demands on other parts of the corporate structure. The required financial commitment is high also--well over \$500,000 in direct costs to Tenneco apart from staff time.

While adoption brings numerous short-term improvements to both school and students, evidence of gain in long-term outcomes is slight. Given the overall scarcity of resources available to disadvantaged youth, it may be that the adoption model, despite its obvious advantages to both partners, is not the optimal means to effectively link business and schools. However, the Tenneco/Jefferson Davis partnership is an example of an adoption that is well-executed and provides considerable benefits to an inner-city school and its students.

For additional information about this program, contact:

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Houston, Texas 77001

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## APPENDIX A

Organizations providing worksites for student positions include:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| American Red Cross                                      | KUHF Radio                                   |
| Association for the Advancement<br>of Mexican Americans | KUHF-TV Channel 8                            |
| Boy Scouts of America                                   | Latino Learning Center                       |
| Business Volunteers for the<br>Arts                     | Louie Welch Day Care                         |
| Camp Fire Association                                   | Mayor's Volunteer Program                    |
| Casa de Amigos Clinic                                   | M.D. Anderson Hospital                       |
| Centro Para Immigrantes                                 | Methodist Hospital                           |
| Chicano Training Center                                 | Museum of Fine Arts                          |
| Cities in Schools                                       | Neighborhood Centers                         |
| Consumer Credit Counseling<br>Service                   | Rice University Library                      |
| Family Service Center                                   | Rotary Boys Club                             |
| Greater Houston Convention<br>and Visitors Council      | S.E.R. Jobs for Progress<br>Stages           |
| Harris County Hospital District                         | St. Luke's Hospital                          |
| Harris County Sheriff's Office                          | St. Thomas University                        |
| Hermann Hospital  | Texas Children's Hospital                    |
| Hispanic Chamber of Commerce                            | Texas Southern University                    |
| Houston Committee for Private<br>Sector Initiatives     | University of Houston                        |
| Houston Police Department                               | University of Houston<br>Childcare Center    |
| Houston Fire Department                                 | University of Texas Health<br>Science Center |
| Houston Independent School<br>District                  | United Negro College Fund                    |
| Houston Public Library                                  | United Way                                   |
| Houston Community College                               | Wesley Community Center                      |
|   | YMCA   |
|   | YWCA   |

## APPENDIX B

The types of entry-level positions filled by students over a recent three-year period include:

- o Bookkeeper Assistant
- o Childcare Aide
- o Clerk-Typist
- o Health Aide
- o Laboratory Assistant
- o Library Assistant
- o Mail Service Courier
- o Mechanic Assistant
- o Medical Records Clerk
- o Messenger
- o News Assistant
- o Nursing Assistant
- o Office Assistant
- o Physical Education Assistant
- o Police Aide
- o Print Shop Aide
- o Purchasing Clerk
- o Receptionist
- o Recreational Aide
- o Research Assistant
- o Secretary
- o Teacher Aide
- o Wood Shop Assistant