Presentation on Programs Promoting a College-Going Culture at Alamo Community College District, Austin Community College, and South Texas College

Summary of Discussion

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Participation and Success Committee

January 5, 2009

Panelists:  Dr. Bruce Leslie, Chancellor, Alamo Community College District
Dr. Steve Kinslow, President, Austin Community College
Dr. Shirley Reed, President, South Texas College

Dr. Leslie began his portion of the agenda item by thanking the committee members and Coordinating Board staff for their support. Alamo Community College District has been a beta site for the Achieving the Dream national initiative. One challenge they faced is the data issue. Presently they have an initiative in San Antonio that includes six school districts, The University of Texas at San Antonio, and the Alamo Community Colleges called Pathways that came out of discussions with Commissioner Paredes and Deputy Commissioner David Gardner at the Coordinating Board. Basically, it is a tracking system that will help develop mechanisms that will hopefully go statewide. They are also talking with South Texas College and El Paso Community College to add another site. At present, they are working with the Houston Endowment in hopes that in March their board will fund a parallel initiative. Once the pilot project is completed, the hope is the Legislature will adopt the model. Using this model will enable them to look at five years of data and identify where the barriers are to student accomplishments starting with the eighth grade going all the way up to university level.

The Alamo Community College District has set a goal to become the “best community college in the nation.” This is a relatively easy, symbolic statement. They know who does best in certain areas, so they are working to identify those programs and can strive to exceed what they’re doing. They are presently sending out teams nationwide to look at why one college is doing something better than anyone else, and to figure out how ACCD can do it. One of the challenges of doing that is getting the data. The message is the data issue around how they compare their programs to other institutions so they have valid information is crucial.

One of the things that community colleges across the nation are excelling at is moving public schools from the dependence on advanced placement as the solution to helping students get a leg up on going to college to integrating dual credit throughout the school systems in a way that provides no economic barrier to those students. ACCD does not charge tuition for in-district or out-of-district dual credit students, which results in a ten million dollar per year deferral of revenue. Dr. Leslie has instructed his staff to
come up with a scholarship certificate to award to their current 5,800 dual credit
students so students and their families recognize dual credit as a scholarship.

Dr. Leslie outlined the current ACCD strategic plan, which has five goals and one
outcome. This is the structure they are using to become the “best community college in
the nation.” The goals, as approved by their board, are: access, student support,
workforce development, capacity to serve, and communication (internal/external). The
only outcome is student success. The only purpose for everything they do is to help
students do better. The strategic plan logo is used in all of their colleges as wall posters;
it is used on pins, and incorporated in any presentations. Any groups in the college -
from custodians to faculty - are aware of the strategic plan. This has become a very
powerful tool. The next step is to turn this into a process where all jobs at the colleges
relate to the strategic plan, which requires administrative changes. The model they use
for this is called the Baldridge model, first used in the 1980’s and developed for the
industrial sector in response to how to compete globally. It is basically a balanced
scorecard model that illustrates the idea that you cannot just pay attention to one thing,
such as what you do in the classroom. There are critical elements of how an
organization needs to function to support, in this case, what happens in the classroom.

Another model ACCD is using is “Good to Great,” which is based on the idea that
once you get momentum going it will sustain itself and will not require top leadership to
keep telling people what to do. Combined with the Baldridge model, these are the
visual tools they are using to implement the strategic plan across their colleges.

Dr. Leslie outlined the Achieve the Dream program which focuses on increasing
student academic performance, particularly disadvantaged students and students of
color, with the goal of as you do better for those students, all students will benefit.
Another focus is to create a culture of evidence, which he mentioned earlier. Another is
to integrate sustainable strategies for improved student outcomes. At ACCD they use the
Achieve the Dream model in their Developmental Education math program, and it is
becoming apparent why students are not doing well in math. They also use it in
“gatekeeper” courses. Another focus is to support the “first time in college” student.
They are learning to look at student success in the first semester of school with the
understanding that if students are not successful then they will have a hard time being
successful in the future.

Superintendents have shared that if they can get students through the eighth
and ninth grade, they can get them through high school. Dr. Leslie believes that, at that
point, ACCD, using the Achieve the Dream model, can get them through college. They
work very closely with the school districts and are making some very good headway.

He outlined some interventions they use, such as specialized math and science
courses. They found students going for non-science degrees do not need the same math
courses. UT will be presenting information on statistics-based math this spring. ACCD
has invited high schools and the business community to give input for the type of math
students need. They will look at ways to customize math tracks to careers. Another
intervention is “bio spots” at two campuses for tutoring students because they found
that students would not take advantage of tutoring offered by faculty. So they brought
the faculty into the hallways, the gym, or the student centers to offer on the spot tutoring. That has been very successful. Another project is learning communities at each of the five colleges. Another intervention is drop counseling, which is required if a student wants to drop a course. They found that if they can intervene at the beginning they can help the student because most of the time the reasons for dropping the course are outside of the academic area. Then have open entry, open exit developmental reading courses to continue helping throughout a student’s college career.

Dr. Leslie ended his presentation by thanking the committee for the time to explain the successes and challenges at ACCD.

Dr. Stephen Kinslow focused his comments on P-16 efforts at Austin Community College. Enrollment is on target at the college. Three initiatives highlighted at the college are Early College, ACC/ISD Partnerships, and promoting a college-going culture. One thing they do is make sure school districts in the partnership program set annual goals using a written MOU with each district that helps set targets.

The college has seen dramatic increases in dual credit and co-enrollment, as well as in tech prep initiatives. College Connection has been extraordinary at the college, helping to get information out to prospective students. They started with two high schools and are now working with 55 high schools, going from 400 seniors to over 17,000.

Because ACC does not have the facilities to house early college high school students, they have come up with different ways of meeting the requirements for the Early College High School program. One is at Crockett High School where students take early college high school courses at the school and graduate with college credit. Lockhart High School has a similar program. They are also overseeing a CTE/College and Career Prep Program at Austin and Lockhart ISD.

Creating a college-going culture entails summer bridge programs with more than 30 school districts, a summer youth academy for fourth to seventh graders, and summer camps for enrichment and STEM opportunities. They also presently have two mobile GO centers available.

Dr. Kinslow’s recommendations to enhance success in Closing the Gaps are:
- Support statewide GPA calculation for dual credit, AP, IB, and CTE
- Implement statewide-approved dual credit list
- Support efforts for equal dual credit funding to school districts and colleges when students pay tuition, fee, or textbook costs
- Factor dual credit into school district accountability ratings
- Support local articulation agreements and Advanced Tech Credit

Dr. Kinslow also believes it is important to participate in a national clearinghouse to track Texas graduates who go into out-of-state higher education institutions. Other recommendations are to increase funding for community colleges and support of CTE programs at all levels. ACC is spending a lot of time speaking with legislators, as well as
regional chambers of commerce to bring more business leaders in to help them understand the value of community colleges in ensuring an educated workforce pipeline.

Dr. Kinslow thanked the committee for the opportunity to speak with them today.

Dr. Shirley Reed from South Texas College spoke about dual enrollment at the college. Their region is on the US-Mexico border and there is a desperate need for a trained workforce. Half of the adult population over the age of 25 has less than a high school diploma. Of that number, half has less than a ninth grade education. All of this framed a key strategic direction to transform the region into a culture where going to college is possible and expected. This was a key factor in the focus on dual enrollment. With the guidance of the Coordinating Board, they raised the bar and increased expectations for students. They are working with 35 high schools and presently have 7,000 students participating. They waive all tuition and fees. School districts reimburse faculty costs, which makes this program affordable for everyone. There has been a 10% gain in enrollment at South Texas College and they believe it is attributable to the fact that high school students without funding resources get a head start through the dual enrollment program and they are successful. The irony is that only 20 percent of the students in the program matriculate to South Texas College. The larger number go on to flagship schools or out-of-state institutions.

Two dual enrollment academies, one for students in medical sciences and the other for students in engineering have been very successful. They are modest programs due to funding and resources. Profiles for students in these programs are:

- 76% first generation
- 96% Hispanic
- Over half are female
- 86% receive an Associate degree with their high school diploma
- 100% transfer into college

Successes of the recent engineering class in the dual enrollment academy are that two female graduates were recruited by Stanford on full scholarships and two graduates received a Bill and Melinda Gates scholarship. In the class of 64, scholarships amounted to $1.8 million.

Dr. Reed thanked her colleagues and the committee members for this opportunity today.

NOTES FROM CHAIR BRICKER:

1. Regarding the tracking of data: one model that all can use seamlessly---Pathways? Would all community colleges using Achieving the Dream have access already to one model?

2. Dual credit:
   a. standards acknowledged across state so that all would recognize a consistency
b. fit into TEA’s Accountability System (via current Legislature’s new Accountability System)
c. transfer issues resolved/AP issues resolved
d. unfunded mandate—funding for service areas’ students; books and tuition issues

3. Structure and establish ad hoc or blue ribbon committee comprised of TEA, THECB, community college leadership

4. Transfer issues: reverse transfer the norm; 60 hour resolved.
   a. Establish a common state-wide transfer agreement similar to the state of Virginia (check out http://www.vccs.edu/transfer/). That will help ensure those students who wish to transfer will have no barriers to doing so.
   b. The emphasis should be on completing the associate degree BEFORE transferring, as in Florida. This will save the state money as state scholarships go further at community colleges and community colleges can better absorb enrollment growth (Example: ACCD’s spring is currently up 7.7%).

5. TBEC presentation set up for business/education leaders (L. Bricker can help)

6. Change funding system for adult basic education

7. PR campaign across state to increase prestige of community colleges

8. TEOG issues

9. Also as in Florida, let community colleges offer BA degrees. Again, community colleges’ low cost reduces investment required by the state saving money to expand capacity (local issue for community colleges) and scholarships go further. This would also go a long way to raise the stature of community colleges without substantially changing our mission.

10. STC expressed concern regarding the Coordinating Board’s transfer rate definition. If community colleges are so valued by the State of Texas, why is the definition of a transfer student defined as a community college student who completes 30 semester credit hours prior to transfer. Dr. Reed suggested the transfer definition and rate should be based upon graduation from a community college.

11. Annexation/service area issues (One example—law requires 12 hours of dual credit in high schools, yet community colleges have to charge more for out of district OR fund it themselves, costing ACCD more than $6 million/year out of their own budget)

“This was an excellent panel, and I hope that those who weren’t in attendance are able to watch the discussion via the internet, as well as read the information that the staff and I have provided. I feel that it is critical for us to keep community college issues on the front burner, and I am appreciative of our staff for making this panel happen!” – Laurie Bricker