

**2015
Texas Higher Education
Star Awards**



November 20, 2015

15th Annual Texas Higher Education Star Awards

Presented by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Star Award, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 2001, recognizes exceptional contributions toward meeting one or more of the goals of *Closing the Gaps by 2015*, the Texas higher education plan adopted by the Coordinating Board in October 2000. The plan establishes four goals – to close the gaps in student participation, student success, academic excellence, and research.

(See *Closing the Gaps by 2015* at <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/closingthegaps>)

Criteria for the 2015 Star Award

1. Programs, projects, and activities must:
 - have been in operation for at least three years;
 - demonstrate successful outcomes in areas of student participation, student success, academic excellence, or research that are attributable to the program, project, or activity;
 - demonstrate an efficient cost/benefit ratio per student; and
 - clearly demonstrate improvement and excellence over time through the use of benchmarks and other comparison data that allow progress to be monitored and evaluated.
2. Groups and organizations must:
 - have been focused on helping to meet the goals of *Closing the Gaps* for at least three years (such as promoting a college-going culture);
 - demonstrate successful outcomes in areas of student participation, student success, academic excellence, or research that are attributable to the efforts of the group or organization; and
 - clearly demonstrate improvement and excellence over time through the use of benchmarks and other comparison data that allow progress to be monitored and evaluated.
3. Partnerships must:
 - have been in existence for at least three years;
 - demonstrate successful outcomes in areas of student participation, student success, academic excellence, or research that are attributable to the partnership;
 - demonstrate an efficient cost/benefit ratio per student; and
 - clearly demonstrate improvement and excellence over time through the use of benchmarks and other comparison data that allow progress to be monitored and evaluated.

Each year, the Coordinating Board receives applications from all over Texas. After an initial review by a Coordinating Board staff committee, a group of applicants are named finalists.

The nine-member Texas Higher Education Star Award Selection Committee includes three members of the Coordinating Board, three Texas business and community leaders, and three out-of-state education experts. A winner or winners are chosen from this review committee's highest rankings.

2015 Texas Higher Education Star Award Recipient



The Education and Career Positioning System
Linking Student Pathways to Careers

Lone Star College – University Park



2015 Texas Higher Education Star Award Finalists

Alamo Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Program

Alamo Colleges

Alamo Integrated Basic Skills Education Skills Training (Alamo I-BEST) is a model originating in Washington State that accelerates adult basic education (ABE) skills and the progress of English as a Second Language (ESL) students through the community college system. In addition to helping students complete coursework in workforce demand focused courses, Alamo I-BEST also serves to increase basic skills at more accelerated rates than traditional remedial or federally funded ABE programs. Alamo I-BEST was founded with the first round of Accelerate Texas Grants, "2010-2011 Adult Basic Education Innovation Grant," offered by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The research and evidence from the Community College Research Center (CCRC), Alamo I-BEST data collection, and the mentorship and data collection of surrounding community colleges through Accelerate Texas grant funding has shown that Alamo I-BEST is an effective practice for low-skilled adults who test into the Alamo Prep level, based on Texas Success Initiative (TSI) scores. Alamo I-BEST now serves as a model for integration into all of the Alamo Colleges located in the district, as well as a mentor for four rural colleges in South Texas.

750 students are expected to complete at least Level One certificates by the end of the 2014-2015 academic year. Job placement for Alamo I-BEST graduates is 72 percent, with graduates not yet placed continuing to work with job developers. The combined three-year completion rate is 89 percent for I-BEST students, compared to 38 percent for Alamo College non-I-BEST students at similar academic levels.

For additional information, please contact Melissa Sadler-Nitu, Alamo I-BEST Director, at mnit@alamo.edu or (210) 485-0240.

2015 Texas Higher Education Star Award Finalists

No Excuses Poverty Initiative: Creating a Systemic Approach to Overcoming Poverty Barriers in Higher Education

Amarillo College

In early 2011, Amarillo College (AC) established the No Excuses Poverty Initiative, which began as a single-focused initiative supported by grant funding. Four years later, the No Excuses Poverty Initiative is an institutionally supported systemic approach to reducing poverty barriers that hinder students from achieving their educational goals. AC's No Excuses Poverty Initiative has five separate components; each piece is interconnected to create a systemic approach to erasing poverty barriers for students. The individual programs and services are Social Services, Food Pantry, Coaches & Champions Mentoring, AC Career & Employment Center, and Predictive Modeling for Student Success. Each component links to the others to provide at-risk students with a system designed to promote student success and college completion.

Some notable outcomes of the No Excuses Poverty Initiative are:

- In 2014/2015, nearly \$24,500 was disbursed in private donor funds to assist at-risk students; additionally, 582 students were connected to social services assistance to include housing, utility assistance, food, transportation, and childcare.
- AC's Washington Street Campus Food Pantry averages 70 visits per month with a monthly cost of \$500.
- The average retention for AC is 70 percent, in comparison to 87 percent for the Coaches & Champions Mentoring program. The average persistence rate for AC is 49 percent in comparison to 74 percent for Coaches & Champions.
- The Student Money Management project provided 2,222 students with financial planning assistance during the 2014/2015 academic year.
- Students who engage in seven or more hours in tutoring services per semester are over 80 percent more successful in courses such as math, English, and science.

For additional information, please contact Jordan Herrera, Social Services Coordinator, at j0333462@actx.edu or (806) 371-5439.

2015 Texas Higher Education Star Award Finalists

Vocational Advancement and Skill Training (V.A.S.T.) Academy

Houston Community College

As one of the first programs of its kind in the nation, Houston Community College's (HCC) Vocational Advancement and Skill Training (V.A.S.T.) Academy provides postsecondary opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs), including autism, a population that traditionally has been underserved and unable to participate in higher education after high school.

V.A.S.T. Academy has been transforming the lives of differently abled individuals with a broad range of abilities, giving them the chance to receive affordable, postsecondary, career-readiness training and meaningful credentials or workforce certificates. These credentials enable students to compete and gain employment and to achieve greater independence in society.

What began as a small life-skills program in 1990 has become an academy serving close to 200 students and offering a two-year Career Readiness/Occupational Skills Certificate under the Workforce Division of HCC.

V.A.S.T. Academy data show:

- A 75 percent successful completion rate for students seeking to complete its two-year Occupational Skills Certificate.
- A 50 percent employment-success rate increase in the last two years.
- Between 15 and 20 percent of graduates enrolling in credit courses.
- Successful completion of HCC certificate programs.
- More than 60 employer partnerships that provide internships or employment opportunities for V.A.S.T. graduates.

For additional information, please contact Sue Moraska, Director/HCC-VAST Academy, at sue.moraska@hccs.edu or (713) 718-6833.

2015 Texas Higher Education Star Award Finalists

Teaching Highlighting Engagement (THE) Initiatives

Lone Star College - Montgomery

Teaching Highlighting Engagement (THE) Initiatives at Lone Star College (LSC) – Montgomery were created in 2012 as a cluster of related activities intended to increase participation, success, and retention in courses affiliated with the THE Initiatives, enhance faculty development and collaboration, improve and expand the use of advanced instructional technology, and provide a sustainable incubator for innovation at the college. All activities are geared toward effective student engagement.

Effective student engagement through the THE Initiatives is accomplished through innovation and collaboration in the areas of technology, instructional spaces, furnishings designed for collaboration, and a shift in teaching philosophy. Connections within the college are created and strengthened through cross-disciplinary partnerships, primarily through themed courses and variations on learning communities. Moreover, student engagement through service has included hosting and participating in blood drives, canned food drives, and scholarship drives.

The components of THE Initiatives are THE Learning Networks, THE Classroom, THE Engagement Lounge, THE Lecture Hall, THE Collaborative Classrooms, and THE Studio. Each of the components is aligned with the overall goals of the THE Initiatives, but require varying levels of commitment and time on the part of students and faculty. Components suit varied activities in different disciplines and interests and afford faculty the chance to reach a comfort level incrementally with advanced technology.

The percentage of students who have completed courses successfully at the LSC-Montgomery campus increased from 66 percent to 70 percent between 2013 and 2015.

For additional information, please contact Jared Cootz, Professor of Sociology & Psychology, Department Chair, ESC/THE Initiatives, at jcootz@lonestar.edu or (936) 273-7048.

2015 Texas Higher Education Star Award Finalists

The Education and Career Positioning System Linking Student Pathways to Careers

Lone Star College - University Park

The Education and Career Positioning System (ECPS) is designed to educate students about the available degree pathways and career options available to them. It takes into consideration the student's values, abilities, personality traits, as well as perceived skill-sets, and guides them to a degree program and career path based on the outcomes of their assessment.

The ECPS was initiated to increase students desiring to enroll by 30 percent annually, increase retention by a minimum of 10 percent, increase completion rates by 5 percent, and guide students through to success in a reduced timeframe. After three years, the ECPS has allowed Lone Star College – University Park (LSC-UP) to become the fastest growing college in Texas with an annual enrollment increase of 30 percent, increased retention as high as 19 percent in focus areas, and the movement of more students through to completion in a timely fashion.

LSC-UP has increased student enrollment from 3,600 to 9,800 and shortened the time to completion by an estimated 25 percent.

For additional information, please contact Shah Ardalan, President, at shah.ardalan@lonestar.edu or (281) 290-2999.

2015 Texas Higher Education Star Award Finalists

Project Xtreme Academic Makeover

North Central Texas College

Structured support interventions are a critical aspect of student success. All Xtreme/Intervention students complete and utilize a Time Management and Advising Assignment to help plan their academic future. A specific advisor is assigned to each targeted course section and conducts a class presentation and campus tour during the first few weeks of the semester. Students in the course are required to meet individually with the assigned advisor to complete an in-depth academic advising session that includes a discussion of the concepts of college readiness, course sequencing, and educational planning. Students are also required to utilize North Central Texas College (NCTC) tutoring services that include the math lab, writing center, supplemental instruction, and online tutoring through grade results.

To transform students' academic behaviors and create a contextual learning environment, contextual skills and key academic behaviors are embedded into targeted courses. Elements of the Learning Framework course (EDUC/PSYC1300) that focus on college-readiness skills and other academic interventions are used for curriculum content. Specific objectives and interventions are met through the course curriculum and include the following: strengthen academic performance by identifying key components of the successful student; enhance study skills, critical thinking skills, and communication skills; develop self-awareness and career goals within an academic atmosphere; identify college resources; describe the research and theory in the psychology of learning, cognition, and motivation; identify learning styles and analyze various factors that impact learning; describe different perspectives of learning and adapt to different learning environments; and compose writing assignment(s) using Standard American English and basic computer skills.

Since implementation of Project Xtreme, 6,475 students have been served. Students who use support services and meet the course requirements have a 1.9 percent higher GPA; students earning a C or higher in targeted courses has improved by 10 percent; the success rate in subsequent courses is 10 percent higher than control group students; 30 percent of students completed 5 or more hours of tutoring; 62 percent of students met with an advisor and have an academic plan on file; 88 percent of students completed the Time Management Assignment; the number of associate degrees awarded has increased by 45 percent; and the number of certificates awarded has increased by 20 percent.

For additional information, please contact Amy Klohn, Quality Enhancement Plan Coordinator, at aklohn@nctc.edu or (940) 498-6416.

2015 Texas Higher Education Star Award Finalists

Pathways to College Access and Career Readiness

The University of Texas at Arlington

The Pathways to College Access and College Readiness (PCACR) Program prepares college students to act as mentors to high school students in seven local school districts in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex area to both ensure students' academic success in high school, as well as give them the tools they need to pursue a postsecondary education. To further support these students, the program also has served the parents of these high school students through on-campus workshops, as well as through GO Centers in their children's high schools, to give parents the information and tools to support their children. Likewise, the PCACR program has provided a variety of early college experiences to ensure that all students will understand the importance of education and its role in their future success as citizens of this country.

The PCACR Program at The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) has three components: (a) mentoring between first-generation college students and culturally/linguistically diverse and at-risk high school students; (b) supporting parents/families through free workshops and conferences, both at their children's campus and UTA; and (c) facilitating early college experiences for students in partner school districts.

The PCACR Program has served 22,362 high school students (unduplicated count), 3,034 culturally/linguistically diverse parents, and has recruited over 300 UTA college students to work as mentors. In the 2014-2015 academic year, 1,639 parents visited the GO Center at their children's schools to seek support from mentors.

For additional information, please contact Carla Amaro, Assistant Professor of Bilingual and ESL Education, at amaro@uta.edu or (817) 272-3346.

Texas Higher Education Star Awards Past Recipients

2014

Gulf Coast Partners Achieving Student Success

Lee College and Goose Creek Consolidated I.S.D.

San Antonio College GED-to-College Transition Program

San Antonio College Services for Women & Non-Traditional Students and San Antonio I.S.D.

Texas A&M – Blinn TEAM Program

Texas A&M University and Blinn College

Developmental Math Program

The University of Texas at El Paso

2013

Brookhaven College Counseling Center SkillsShops

Brookhaven College

Students Advancing Through Involvement in Research Student Talent Expansion Program (STAIRSTEP)

Lamar University

Temple College – Texas Bioscience Institute

Temple College

2012

Alamo Area Academies

Alamo Colleges

Dual Enrollment Medical Science Academy

South Texas College

UT Arlington-Academic Partnerships BSN Completion Program

The University of Texas at Arlington College of Nursing and Academic Partnerships

Gateway Project

West Texas A&M University

2011

In-House Online Tutoring

Houston Community College System

IDEA Public Schools

IDEA Public Schools

Students Together, Involving, Networking, and Guiding (STING)

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College

Gateways to Excellence in Math and Science (GEMS)

The University of Texas at Dallas

UTMB Integrated Medical Curriculum

The University of Texas Medical Branch

Uplift Education

Uplift Education

2010

Learning Frameworks

Brazosport College

College of Nursing Undergraduate Nursing Weekend Program

Texas Woman's University T. Boone Pickens Institute of Health Sciences, Dallas Center

Joint Admission Medical Program (JAMP)

Created by Senate Bill 940 of the 77th Texas Legislature

Modeling Excellence in Collaborative Teacher Education

University of Houston Downtown, Lone Star College-Kingwood, and Lone Star College-CyFair

2009

Mathematics Outreach Center

Amarillo College

College, Career & Technology Academy

South Texas College and Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District

TAMU-Commerce/Mesquite Independent School District Partnership

TAMU-Commerce and Mesquite Independent School District

Partnering for Teachers

Texas Woman's University and Dallas ISD

Late Intervention Program

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Providing Access to Success: Emerald Eagle Scholars Program

University of North Texas

2008

Online Teacher Preparation Program for Paraprofessionals

Stephen F. Austin State University

UTEP-EPCC Transfer Scholarship Program

The University of Texas at El Paso

Second Degree Accelerated BSN Program

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

Collegiate Challenge Program

Spring Branch Independent School District

University-wide Enrollment Management

University of North Texas

College of Education Partnership

South Plains College/Texas Tech University

Student Employment Initiative

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College

2007

LULAC Parent/Child Scholarship Program

Alamo Community College District-San Antonio College

Developmental Education Initiative Title V Project

El Paso Community College

UT TeleCampus

The University of Texas System

Student Money Management Center

University of North Texas

2006

College Connection Program

Austin Community College

Academic Assistance and Resource Center

Stephen F. Austin State University

SureStart Program

Tarrant County College District

Chemistry Peer Leader Program

The University of Texas at El Paso

YES College Preparatory Schools

YES College Preparatory Schools

2005

Graduates and Completers Projects

Houston Community College System

Summer Bridge Program

North Harris Montgomery Community College District-North Harris College

Navarro College Partnership

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS)

University of Houston

Model Institutions for Excellence Initiative

University of Texas at El Paso

Gulf Coast Consortia/Keck Center

University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston

2004

Community Link

Amarillo College

College Assistance Migrant Program

St. Edward's University

College of Science & Technology Scholars Academy at UH-D

University of Houston-Downtown

Law School Preparation Institute

The University of Texas at El Paso

2003

Community Education Centers

Alamo Community College District

Strategies for Success

Alamo Community College District – San Antonio College

Rising Star Program

Dallas County Community College District

The Academy for Collegiate Excellence and Student Success

Prairie View A&M University

Pathways to Success in Science

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

South Plains Nursing Education Community Coalition

Texas Tech Health Sciences Center, South Plains College, Lubbock Christian University, and Covenant School of Nursing, in partnership with University Medical Center, Covenant Health System, WorkSource of the South Plains, and American State Bank

Entering Student Program

The University of Texas at El Paso

Increasing the Success of the Most Economically Disadvantaged Students

West Texas A&M University

2002

Premedical Honors College

Baylor College of Medicine

The Monitored Probation Early Intervention Program

Lamar University

HomeGrown Teacher Education Program

San Jacinto College-North Campus

Nursing Success Program

Texas Woman's University

The Mother-Daughter Program

The University of Texas at El Paso

Texas Prefreshman Engineering Program

The University of Texas at San Antonio

University Scholars

The University of Texas-Pan American

2001

First-Year Learning Communities Program

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Virtual College of Texas

Texas Association of Community Colleges

Mathworks Summer Program

Texas State University-San Marcos

The University Writing Center

Texas Tech University

Jesse H. Jones Academic Institute

University of Houston-Downtown