

Leah Meyer Austin
Institutional Student Success Leadership Award
2011

Achieving the Dream Honors
El Paso Community College
Receives \$25,000 Award



Lumina Foundation for Education created this award for institutional transformation in 2008 in honor of Leah Meyer Austin, its former Senior Vice President for Program Development and Organizational Learning. Her visionary leadership shaped the development of the national Achieving the Dream initiative to improve student success at the nation's community colleges, particularly for students of color and low-income students. This award is open solely to institutions actively affiliated with Achieving the Dream.

Aligning with the goals and values of the Achieving the Dream, this leadership award recognizes outstanding institutional achievement in creating excellence and equity through policies, practices, and an institutional culture and climate that support and increase student success, with particular attention to low-income students and students of color.

The winning college may use the \$25,000 cash award for any student success purpose it deems appropriate.

El Paso Community College

El Paso, Texas / President: Richard M. Rhodes / www.epcc.edu

El Paso Community College receives the 2011 Leah Meyer Austin Institutional Student Leadership Award for simultaneously increasing student success and college access. With Achieving the Dream the college instigated a college-going culture in a metropolitan border area where 82% of residents are Hispanic, 27% are low-income, and 54% have a high school diploma or less education.

EPCC's multi-faceted strategy reduces the number of students who need developmental courses; improves the performance of students who place in developmental courses; adds to enrollment in gateway courses; expands completion rates in gateway courses; and raises graduation rates.

"The Achieving the Dream initiative was the best thing that could have happened to EPCC," said President Richard Rhodes. "It motivated us to use data intentionally to inform our decision making and helped us focus on student success. The outcomes have empowered our faculty, staff, students, and community to engage in promoting and supporting student success at levels never seen before."

This award recognizes the college's presidential leadership, the breadth of the college's successful programs, and the impact of the programs on the community.

EPCC Engages Faculty & Regional Education Community

Early in its Achieving the Dream process EPCC's Core Team decided on a transparent, public approach for sharing data with the college's faculty, local school superintendents, and community advisory groups. Data was shared at public meetings without finger pointing or assessment of blame. Airing some facts (for example, fewer than 1% of the

first-time-in college students during 2003 were college-ready) carried a high potential for negative media coverage and hard feelings. By focusing its many "brave conversations" with the community on how to solve the problems identified by data, EPCC used its institutional research as a rallying point for effective activities.

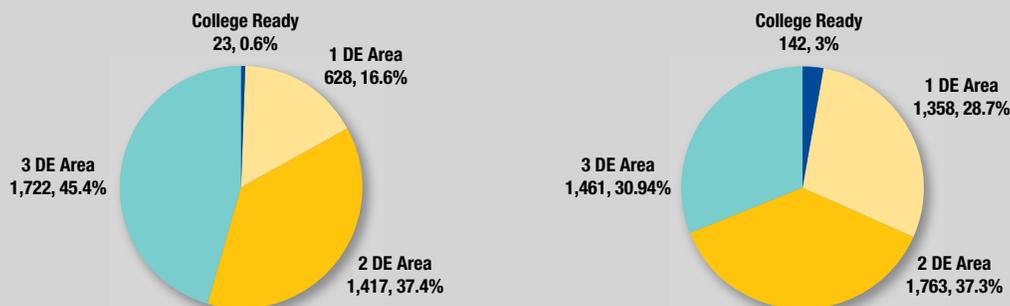
Encouraged by the ATD philosophy, the college used information about best practices to develop interventions and to gauge progress with data. "Our faculty have become so accustomed to using data in their disciplines, we don't have to stress this anymore. They are using data themselves," said Lydia Tena, dean of the college's Northwest Campus and ATD Leader College liaison.

Faculty from various campus councils have served with college administrators on the ATD Core Team and at every level of the college's ATD structure. Tena attributes the faculty buy-in to their involvement from the beginning. Faculty will continue as key members of the Student Success Core Team that will lead ongoing student success efforts as the college transitions from ATD.

With its ATD-inspired emphasis on degree completion, the college modified its longtime motto "EPCC: A Great Place to Start" by adding "EPCC: The Best Place to Finish." General operating funds are being used to expand the most promising ATD strategies at all five campuses and to continue two college-wide positions—a director of student success and a director of college readiness—that were created during Achieving the Dream. Based on the evidence, EPCC is scaling up the following five programs.

The College Readiness Initiative (CRI) built on the relationships initiated by the regional Collaborative for

Percentage of First Time in College Students Who Placed into 1, 2, or 3 Developmental Education Areas
Fall 2003 and Fall 2009



Developmental Education Placements of FTIC Students

While overall enrollments at EPCC grew from 2003 to 2009 fewer first time in college (FTIC) students placed in three developmental education courses, and a greater proportion of students needed just one developmental education course.

Academic Excellence. It united the college readiness efforts of EPCC, the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), 12 area school districts, and the state's regional education service center. CRI developed a six-step protocol that makes students, parents, teachers, counselors, and other stakeholders aware of the importance of the Accuplacer placement exam. Now high schools not only administer the placement exam well ahead of students' graduation, they inform students and their parents about the importance of the exam and how doing well on it will save time and money on developmental courses in college. The high schools also provide post-test interventions to students who do not score well. With agreement on CRI goals, the college left it up to the individual school districts to set up the interventions that work with their students. "The empowerment has been one of the key elements," Tena said.

The Summer Bridge Program (also known as Project Dream) is a voluntary, yet intensive, program for students who place in at least one developmental course. Students meet every weekday for five weeks for one hour of reading instruction, one hour of writing, and two hours of math. In addition to 100 contact hours with instructors, students receive mentoring and tutoring. Nearly all the students who start the Bridge Program complete it, a significant majority of them enroll in college, and many complete at least one course.

The Pretesting Retesting Educational (PREP) Program uses a case management approach to prepare students for the Accuplacer placement test. Students who have never taken the test attend a pretest overview session where they learn tips for taking the computerized exam. Sample questions are reviewed, and the reasons for striving to do well on the test are explained. Students who complete this intervention program usually place out of one or more developmental courses.

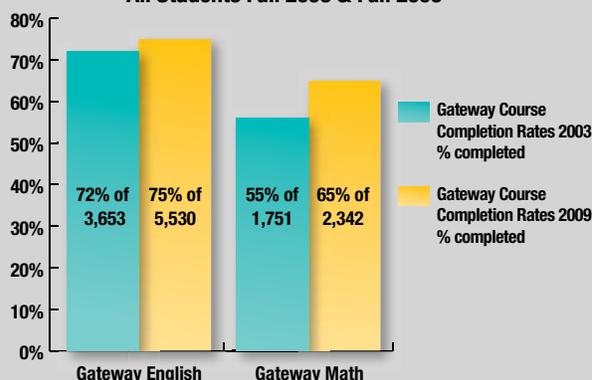
Math Emporiums allow students who place in developmental math to master mathematics concepts by working at their own pace using computer software and "just-in-time" instruction from faculty instructors and tutors. After their math skills are assessed during the first class meeting, students receive a summary of their math deficiencies and choose to complete their program of study over 8 or 16 weeks. A faculty member and two tutors are available to work one-on-one with students as needed during computerized math exercises. Sixty-six percent of the 564 students who enrolled in Math Emporium courses from spring 2009 through summer 2010 completed at least one math course.

**Developmental Education Course Completion Rates
All Students Fall 2003 & Fall 2009**



Placements in developmental English and math decreased from 2003 to 2009 while overall enrollments grew. Math completion rates improved during the period while reading completion rates held steady despite a significant increase in the number of students in developmental reading.

**Gateway Course Completion Rates
All Students Fall 2003 & Fall 2009**



EPCC increased students' enrollment in gateway English and math courses and the proportion of students who completed those gateway courses from 2003 to 2009.

Six Early College High Schools (ECHS) accelerate the learning of diverse students who have not previously been identified as academic stars. The schools grew out of the early intervention efforts instigated by ATD and have evolved on EPCC's campuses with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Texas Education Agency, and the Greater Texas Foundation. This year 2,300 students attend the schools developed in partnership with local school districts, UTEP, and the Texas High School Project. Most of the ECHS students are on track to graduate from high school with associate degrees or 60 hours of college credits. Since 2009 several cohorts of ECHS students completed associate degrees while they were still in high school and, with support from the Greater Texas Foundation, have enrolled in upper division courses at UTEP.

★ SPECIAL RECOGNITION ★
For Leveraging Data

Montgomery County Community College

Blue Bell, Pennsylvania
President: Karen A. Stout
www.mc3.edu

Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) receives special recognition for leveraging data. The college uses data to align its budget decisions and strategic plans with student success goals. It has also revised its policies for admissions, placement, testing, grading, and academic program reviews based on systematic data analysis. The new policies are making a significant impact on students' lives by improving their academic success while saving them time and money. The recent change to placement cutoff scores, alone, affected 1,200 students in fall 2010. At mid-term 83% of the students who previously would not have been able to enroll directly in college-level classes were making satisfactory progress. A two-week accelerated arithmetic review course, four-credit developmental algebra course, and the redesign of its developmental arithmetic course are among the ATD interventions MCCC scaled up to campus-wide curriculum changes based on the positive results of pilot programs. The college developed a Minority Male Mentoring Program in 2009 in response to the achievement gaps among students of color, particularly African American men. Sixty percent of the minority male students who participated in the program persisted from fall to fall compared with 41% of non-participants. During fall 2010, 53 college employees mentored 177 students. Data on other achievement gaps have led to a variety of interventions in 14 gatekeeper courses. Data gathered early in its ATD process prompted MCCC's initial focus on students' college readiness, transitions to college, and first-year experiences.

★ SPECIAL RECOGNITION ★
For Completion

Zane State College

Zanesville, Ohio
President: Paul R. Brown
www.zanestate.edu

Zane State College receives special recognition for completion. Zane State serves a rural Appalachian area of east central Ohio, where 75% percent of the college's students are Pell grant recipients. In fall 2010, 79% of the entering students took either a developmental education course or participated in the college's new MathStart conditional start program. Zane State's initial ATD efforts focused on first-year developmental math students. In addition to academic attention, the students received intensive advising and non-academic intervention services. This approach improved the number of students who successfully completed all developmental education requirements in one year. This broad impact along with analysis of disaggregated data led to development of a comprehensive first-year experience. (Eighty-seven percent of students who successfully complete the first year at Zane State and return the next fall are able to complete their degrees within three years whether or not they start in developmental education.) The first-year experience expanded intensive advising, early alert systems, fast-track developmental courses, and learning communities to all developmental education students. Programs were added to engage high-achieving students who are also at risk of dropping out. The programs have improved term-to-term and year-to-year retention, English gatekeeper course completion, degree completion, and transfer rates. Three-year graduation rates for developmental students now exceed 50%.

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Applications for the 2012 Leah Meyer Austin Institutional Student Success Leadership Award will be available in late spring 2011.
Open solely to colleges actively affiliated with Achieving the Dream
For additional information, please contact Lynn Barnett at atd@aacc.nche.edu.

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