



ROUND ROCK Leader



Your Community News First

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ACC grows readiness program

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College Connection is growing, and not just in Austin. Other community colleges throughout Texas want in as well.

Eight community colleges have started implementing the program, which pairs high school seniors with community college representatives who walk students through the college admissions process. Students are offered assistance with the college application, financial aid and advising at no cost.

College Connection was founded in the spring of 2004 by Austin Community College's Dr. Mary Hensley, vice president of college support systems and ISD relations.

"The program just exploded with interest and participation in just a matter of months," says Hensley. Originally called "The San Marcos Initiative," College Connection grew from one school district to 27, with 58 high schools and more than 17,000 seniors participating in the 2007-08 school year.

College Connection was founded in spring 2004 and was originally called "The San Marcos Initiative."

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has taken notice and is using the program as a statewide model.

"Everybody here has been so impressed with the work that ACC has done and the effort that has taken place, not only to have College Connection with ACC's high schools but in ACC sharing that plan with other community colleges in the state," said Glenda Barron, THECB associate commissioner for participation and success.

THECB is awarding two-year, \$100,000 grants to community colleges wishing to begin College Connection. So many schools expressed interest that the THECB also awarded planning grants in the amount of \$5,000.

Word apparently travels fast. Stories on College Connection have appeared in such large newspapers as the Washington Post and the Seattle Times. Out-of-state community colleges from as far away as Hawaii and California are also interested in implementing the program.

Hensley is thrilled with the attention College Connection has received.

"I think it's a testament to our Board of Trustees, our president, our faculty, and our staff that they embrace new initiatives," says Hensley. "I think all of us are proud that together we are working toward the state strategic plan of Closing the Gaps."

College Connection has a strong program in Round Rock ISD, as well. RRISD students have the opportunity to learn of ACC's program while still in high school.

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