For more than 40 years, Austin Community College District has provided affordable, open access to higher education and training for Central Texans. Today, more than 41,000 credit students and 15,000 noncredit students attend ACC to further their education, learn new job skills, or advance their career.

In recent years, the college has redoubled its efforts to ensure that this access to higher education is accompanied by student achievement. The college has sought to improve student outcomes through a multi-pronged approach addressing topics including college-readiness, student persistence, success and equity, and degree/certificate completion. The efforts are paying off: Degree, certificate, and other award completions have risen 71 percent since AY 2010.

ACC has become a top choice for area high school graduates and a valued partner to local employers. Meanwhile, studies continue to point to the necessity for a postsecondary education in today’s workforce. Increasing the number of students earning a postsecondary certificate or degree is not only good for individuals, but also for communities.

ACC has launched several interconnected initiatives designed to help more students earn a credential that will lead to gainful employment or university transfer. These initiatives align with four critical areas of the student’s college experience:

• Connection, a time when students gain an interest in college and qualify for enrollment;

• Entry, when students enroll, choose an academic goal, remediate if necessary, and successfully complete their gateway college-level courses;

• Progress, when students persist from semester to semester and receive support as needed; and

• Completion, when students successfully complete their academic goals and obtain a credential that is valued in the labor market, or transfer for further study toward a bachelor’s degree at a university.

This report highlights a few of ACC’s recent accomplishments in these four areas and provides a baseline for measuring our progress.
Connection

High School Transition

Research indicates students are more likely to complete a degree if they enroll in postsecondary education directly after high school. While about 90 percent of area graduates intend to do that, about 62 percent actually do.

Moreover, while the number of students graduating from service-area high schools has increased slightly over the past four years, the number of graduates who enroll at ACC in fall after high school remains about the same, averaging 2,741 each year.

DTC70

To provide a clear pathway for high school students, ACC is expanding dual-credit opportunities, providing college-going data to high schools so they can target their efforts, and offering resources to help students prepare for college-readiness assessments and complete admissions and financial aid applications.

ACC also is participating in the Direct-to-College Achievement Plan, or DTC70, a first-of-its-kind endeavor involving the Austin Chamber of Commerce, the University of Texas Ray Marshall Center, several Central Texas businesses, and nine school districts. The group wants 70 percent (the national average) of area seniors to enroll in college right after high school by the Class of 2016 — about 1,400 more than enrolled in 2014.

Recruiting Support

Several ACC initiatives support the DTC70 goal. The College Destination Center, which opened in June at the Highland Business Center, offers in-person help with college application and enrollment steps.

ACC recruitment advisors also provide one-on-one assistance through office hours at more than 60 area high schools, and recruiters are regularly available to answer questions via text, email, and phone.

A customer relationship management (CRM) system will strengthen these efforts by enabling the college to track prospective students from their initial inquiry through enrollment and correspond with them through automated, personalized communications. The system will collect real-time data to help ACC understand and respond to enrollment trends.
High School Programs
ACC offers several options that enable high school students to earn credits toward a college degree.

Dual Credit
Dual-credit enrollment increased 36 percent over five years. ACC currently is working with school district partners to transition more workforce courses to dual credit.

Early College High Schools
Early college high schools provide opportunities for students to earn an associate degree by the time they graduate from high school. The college began with two ECHS partnerships and 287 students in 2011 and expanded to eight partnerships with 437 students in 2015, an increase of 52 percent. Additional partnerships are planned.

Career Academies
Dual-credit career academies allow high school students to earn career-technical certificates in high-demand careers. The ACC IT Academy opened fall 2015 for Austin and Del Valle ISD students. An ACC Health Sciences Academy will launch in fall 2016, and plans continue for additional career academies.
Adult Basic Education

ACC provides Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs for area residents with less than a high school education. Two primary ABE programs are GED Preparation and English as a Second Language (ESL). The Adult Education Division also offers the Career Pathways and Transitions programs to expand students’ access to career training and college transition support respectively.

GED Preparation and ESL

The number of students earning their GED each year has increased 40 percent, from 349 students in FY 2011 to 488 in FY 2014. Students in the ESL program place at varying levels of proficiency in English. Over the past five years, an average of 64 percent of ESL students have improved their proficiency by one or more levels each year.

Career Pathways

In AY15, more than 146 Career Pathways students enrolled in seven career areas, including computer information technology and food service. A partnership with Hyatt Hotels Corp. in Austin provided students with ESL instruction and hospitality training in order to qualify for supervisory opportunities within the Hyatt organization.

Support for College Entry

ACC’s Transitions Program provides high-touch support for adults needing significant guidance and preparation before entering college. Over the past three years, 75 percent of Transitions students have enrolled in subsequent credit or continuing education courses. To open this program to more students, ACC has joined the Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative, a consortium of non-profit, business, philanthropic, and government members.
Entry

Overall Enrollment

Community college enrollments are significantly impacted by economic trends: The number of students enrolling in ACC credit classes reached record levels in 2011 at the height of the economic recession, then declined as the economy recovered. Preliminary fall 2015 enrollment data suggest enrollments again are increasing, indicating a return to enrollment growth, even at a time of high employment.

Required Remediation

The percentage of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students* requiring developmental courses in reading, writing, or mathematics decreased between fall 2010 and fall 2014. Developmental math, typically the largest segment, saw a 14 percentage-point decrease in the number of FTIC students — indicating more students were better prepared for college math courses.

Developmental Education

Successful grades earned in developmental reading, writing, and math showed an average increase of about 3 percent from fall 2010 to fall 2014. The largest increase was in developmental writing, which increased 29 percent. Developmental math successful completions increased almost 8 percent over five years. Developmental reading increased about 7 percent.

*The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System defines FTIC as a student with no prior postsecondary experience attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level.
Developmental Mathematics

ACC has introduced courses to improve achievement in developmental math, a common barrier to student success. These include Developing Mathematical Thinking (MATD 0385), Basic Math with Study Skills (MATD 0332), and Developmental Mathematics (MATD 0421).

**MATD 0385/0332**

Since 2011, about 80 percent of students in MATD 0385 (introduced in 2009) earned an A, B, or C. About 54 percent of students in MATD 0332 have earned passing grades since the course was introduced in 2013. These compare to pass rates of 47 percent for traditional developmental math courses. Preliminary data also suggest the gap in success rates between students of different ethnicities/races is narrowing.

**MATD 0421**

MATD 0421, introduced in fall 2014, uses a modular approach that lets students progress through coursework at a faster pace. It is taught in the ACC Highland Campus ACCelerator, a 604-station computer lab in which students have access to instructors, tutors, and academic coaches. In fall 2014, about 80 percent of MATD 0421 students received a passing grade of A, B, or C, compared with 47 percent of students in traditional developmental math courses. Further, preliminary data indicate that MATD 0421 students are less likely to withdraw from the course than those in traditional developmental math courses (10 percent versus 22 percent).
Progress

Persistence and Graduation Rate

The full-time, credential-seeking FTIC student persistence and graduation rates increased across five cohorts. The number of students persisting through or graduating in their first spring increased 7 percent from fall 2010 to fall 2014, while the number of students persisting through or graduating in their second fall increased by 6 percent.

15- and 30-Credit Completion

Students successfully completing their first 15 credits increased 7 percent from FY 2013 to FY 2015. For the same period, the number of students who successfully completed their first 30 credits remained steady. (NOTE: These calculations were obtained using methodology of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Final success points are determined by THECB).

“We intend to dedicate more attention to helping students achieve significant milestones, such as completion of 15 and 30 semester credit hours.”

— Dr. Richard M. Rhodes
Completion

Awards

Degree, certificate, and other completions increased 71 percent overall from AY10 to AY15 (3,428 completions versus 5,851 completions). Of those, academic degrees increased by 102 percent, core curriculum and field of study completions increased 113 percent, and skills awards increased 87 percent. In addition to credit certificates and skills awards, the college also offers these completions via continuing education. From AY10 to AY15, the credit and continuing education certificates increased 28 percent and the skills awards increased 87 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>AY2010</th>
<th>AY2011</th>
<th>AY2012</th>
<th>AY2013</th>
<th>AY2014</th>
<th>AY2015</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Degrees (AA, AAT, AS)</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>102.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Degrees (AAS)</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td>1,172</td>
<td>1,067</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>25.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates (Credit and Continuing Education)</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>28.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core and Field of Study Completions</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>1,403</td>
<td>1,703</td>
<td>1,760</td>
<td>2,406</td>
<td>2,437</td>
<td>113.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Awards (Credit and Continuing Education)</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>87.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Awards</td>
<td>3,428</td>
<td>4,001</td>
<td>4,541</td>
<td>4,540</td>
<td>5,390</td>
<td>5,851</td>
<td>70.68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(AY 2013 included 12 CEUC Awards to floral design. Blanks were not included in the totals.)
Transfer to a 4-Year Institution

The number of ACC students transferring to four-year institutions remained constant — approximately 3,300 students each year — as did the proportion of credits they earned from fall 2011 to fall 2013. On average, 36 percent of students earned fewer than 30 ACC credits before transferring; 21 percent earned 31-45 ACC credits, and 44 percent earned more than 45 ACC credits.

University Co-enrollment

ACC launched co-enrollment programs with the University of Texas at Austin and Texas State University. Participating students take most of their courses at ACC and one course each semester at the co-enrollment university until they complete their first year. Students can then continue their education at the co-enrollment university without applying for admission. The first co-enrollment program began in fall 2013.

To date 825 students have participated in one of the two programs. Persistence rates are promising: In fall 2013, 84 percent of co-enrolled students persisted from fall to spring, compared with 72 percent of FTIC students overall. While persistence rates for both groups increased in 2014, the co-enrolled students have persisted at a higher rate — 92 percent for co-enrolled FTIC students compared with 77 percent for FTIC students overall.

Licensure Rates

ACC graduates traditionally excel on professional licensure tests. Revisions to Allied Health curricula contributed to increased licensure rates across the board for graduates of ACC’s Vocational and Associate Degree Nursing, Medical Laboratory Technology, Occupational Therapy Assistant, and Surgical Technology programs.

‘Without ACC, I may not have advanced my education past high school.’
— Jeremy Dertien, graduate student, Colorado State University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Licensure Exam Passing Rates</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number Tested</td>
<td>Percent Passed</td>
<td>Number Tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Hygiene</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Medical Services</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighter</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massage Therapy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Laboratory Technology</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing (Professional)</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing (Vocational)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapy Assistant</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Technician</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Therapy Assistant</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Accountant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiology</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonography</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgical Technology</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nursing licensing data may differ from State Board of Nursing reports to ACC. The Board of Nursing reports only those students who passed the licensing exam on their first attempt, while ACC reports all students who passed the exam. In addition, ACC reports licensing data for students who graduate between September 1 and the following August 31. The Board of Nursing may use a graduation cohort from a slightly different time period.
Completion and Progression

ACC’s graduation rate for full-time, credential-seeking FTIC students increased from 4 percent to 8 percent in the three-year graduation rate as reported by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. For FTIC students as a whole, collective positive outcomes increased from 74.2 percent for the fall 2008 cohort to 76.9 percent for the fall 2012 cohort. Positive outcomes are one of the following: graduation from ACC, graduation from another institution, transferred to another institution, completion of the core curriculum, completion of other ACC awards (certificates), still enrolled at ACC, or left ACC in good standing (GPA of 2.0 or higher).

The IPEDS graduation rate reports students as graduates if they have completed the core curriculum with 60 or more credit hours. The collective positive outcomes reported in the lower bar graphs report these students in one of the following groups: graduated from ACC, graduated from another institution, transferred, or core completers.

*Fall 2012 data not yet available. Due to slight differences in the methodology for computing graduation rates, the IPEDS and ACC rates will differ.
What’s Next

ACC’s degree/certificate completion rate remains below state and national averages, a disconcerting data point that does not reflect the college’s commitment to institutional excellence and one that demands a bold response. Below are two initiatives that address the concern.

Guided Pathways

The Futures Institute, composed of 24 faculty, staff, and students selected from more than 100 internal applicants, is developing a proposal to restructure college programs and services into guided pathways that support on-time degree and certificate completion. In fall 2015 Futures Institute members are researching pathway models at leading colleges. In spring 2016 they will work with the college community to convert their recommendations into a strategic, measurable plan that will begin implementation in fall 2016.

Required Student Success Course

Starting in fall 2015, the college began phasing in a new student success course requirement for credit students who entered ACC with fewer than 12 transferable college level credits. By fall 2016, the requirement will extend to all new students with fewer than 12 transferable credits. Most students will take Effective Learning: Strategies for College Success (EDUC 1300 or EDUC 1100), a course designed to teach students the latest theories and strategies for effective learning and introduce them to tools and services for career exploration and college success.

The Futures Institute is exploring options for grouping ACC programs into ‘guided pathways’ that are supported by services and activities designed to keep students on track to graduate.